

2025

Assessment Policy



**SOUTHCHURCH
HIGH SCHOOL**

Review Framework

The policy should be reviewed

	Date
This policy was created in:	November 2025
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	Contents	Page No.
1	Aims	3
2	Legislation and guidance	3
3	Principles of assessment	3
4	Assessment approaches	4
5	Collecting and using data	7
6	Artificial intelligence (AI)	7
7	Reporting to parents/carers	8
8	Inclusion	8
9	Training	8
10	Roles and responsibilities	9
11	Monitoring	10

1. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Provide clear guidelines on our approach to formative and summative assessment
- Establish a consistent and coherent approach to recording summative assessment outcomes and reporting to parents/carers
- Clearly set out how and when assessment practice will be monitored and evaluated

2. Legislation and guidance

Schools have been free to develop their own approaches to assessment since the National Curriculum levels were removed in 2014.

This policy refers to:

- The recommendations in the [final report of the Commission on Assessment without Levels](#)
- Statutory reporting requirements set out in the [Education \(Pupil Information\) \(England\) Regulations 2005: schedule 1](#)
- [2024 assessment and reporting arrangements \(phonics screening check\)](#)
- [2024 key stage 2 assessment and reporting arrangements](#)

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

3. Principles of assessment

What is assessment? Our guiding principles, ethos and vision

Assessment can be described as ‘...the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers, to identify where students are in their learning, where they need to reach, and how best to get there.’ Assessment provides opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, both within and between lessons. Therefore, ‘assessment’ takes place whenever students have to showcase their learning, and whereby teachers can judge pupils’ level of understanding of a concept or topic, or assess how effectively they can demonstrate a skill.

At Southchurch, we believe that assessment both for and of learning is central and fundamental to teaching and learning. Assessment must be timely, focused, interactive and meaningful. Teachers need to be aware of students’ prior knowledge and next steps in learning so that they can adapt their lessons to meet their needs. Assessment is the process by which students, teachers and parents are able to make judgements that allow them to monitor progress, evaluate the learning experience, improve planning, diagnose difficulty, identify progression, assist personalisation and ultimately, improve the quality of teaching and learning. This is why, in May 2025, we revised the whole school lesson structure to include two key checks for learning; in each lesson, after the teacher exposition and collaborative phases, teachers must check how much students have understood and correct any misconceptions that students have. As a school, we believe that these checks for learning are essential to enable students to work independently in the later portion of the lesson and ultimately apply this resilience to their other subjects and to their everyday lives; to become critical thinkers and problem-solvers. Research continues to show that improving formative assessment significantly raises academic standards and pupil achievement (*Black, P. & William, D., 2006. Inside the black box: Raising standards through classroom assessment*).

We have also worked with middle leaders to ensure that assessment remains an important focal point in curriculum design. Again, in May 2025, as middle leaders began to revise their curricula for this academic year, senior leaders worked closely with them to ensure that their schemes for learning included ‘key tasks’, tasks designed to check and capture how much students have learnt up to that point within the unit being studied, which teachers must mark and give students feedback on. The number of key tasks is also proportionate to the number of lessons the subject has per week; for example, in core subjects, humanities and languages, KS3 and 4 students must have two key tasks per unit of work, whilst in practical and vocational subjects, KS3 students complete one key task and KS4 students complete two.

Senior leaders also ensured that the 2025-26 assessment calendar was created in advance, to allow for middle leaders to factor in summative assessment points into their curriculum maps. Knowing when these assessment points would fall for data entry purposes has enabled middle leaders to ensure that the assessments they design are truly 'summative' i.e. assess students on all the knowledge and skills they have acquired, not just in the unit they have recently studied.

Why do we assess?

We use student assessment in the following ways:

- Pedagogy – Evaluate achievement and inform and improve teaching and learning
- Communication – Reporting and reviewing next steps
- Leadership and Management – Teacher targets, appraisals and monitoring progress

We believe the essential element of assessment is to use the data formatively in order to provide clear strategies for making progress.

Types of assessment

a) Formative assessment

Formative assessment helps us find out what pupils do and do not know. We believe regular and spaced, low-stakes assessment embeds learning and provides specific feedback on how pupils can improve.

b) Summative assessment

At pre-determined points throughout the academic year, rigorous and impartial assessments are systematically administered to provide robust and verifiable evidence of pupils' attainment and progress, in relation to their subject-specific targets. These assessments are designed to ensure consistency and reliability in evaluating pupils' performance. Alongside the formative assessment data gathered through the year, this informs our understanding of which pupils require further support, allowing us to target and tailor interventions where necessary. We also ensure that summative assessments provide us with accurate data by training staff in standardisation and moderation processes.

Types of feedback

In order for assessment to be worthwhile, students must receive feedback about how well they have grasped a piece of knowledge or the ability to demonstrate a skill; they need to know their strengths, their areas for improvement, and the next steps they must take to make progress.

It is not always feasible or beneficial for all feedback to be 'evidenced' or 'recorded'. One of our guiding principles is that feedback, whatever form it takes, allows students to improve, and causes thinking and learning to take place. Effective feedback could therefore take various forms: verbal or written.

'Effective feedback, whether it be written or verbal, should move the learning forwards. Comments should identify what has been done well and what still needs improvement, and should give guidance on how to make that improvement...to be effective, feedback should cause thinking to take place.' Black, P. & Wiliam, D., 2006. Inside the black box: Raising standards through classroom assessment

4. Assessment approaches

At Southchurch, we see assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning, and it is inextricably linked to our curriculum.

We use three broad, overarching forms of assessment: daily in-school formative assessment, in-school summative assessment and nationally standardised summative assessment.

4.1 In-school formative assessment

Effective in-school formative assessment enables:

- **Teachers** to identify how pupils are performing on a continuing basis and to use this information to provide appropriate support or extension, evaluate teaching and plan future lessons.
- **Pupils** to measure their knowledge and understanding against learning objectives, and identify areas in which they need to improve.
- **Parents/carers** to gain a broad picture of where the pupil's strengths and areas for development lie, and what they need to do to improve

In order to formatively assess pupils, teachers:

- Design a do now task for students to complete within the first three minutes of every lesson, which consists of three questions in which students must retrieve knowledge from the previous lesson (KS3), or further back (KS4 – last lesson, last topic, last year)
- Embed checks for learning in every lesson, namely at two key points in students' learning. These are typically a few questions to ensure all students are ready to move on. They are completed on red, amber, green cards, or on mini-whiteboards, and are questions the whole class can access.
- Question students regularly throughout the lesson, both knowledge retrieval questions as well as questions to elicit deeper thinking
- Use random selection to take students' answers (rather than hands up), which helps to identify gaps and misconceptions more easily and efficiently
- Correct misconceptions that students have before moving on with the lesson
- Circulate the classroom and assist students who are struggling with paired or independent work
- Use students' understanding in a lesson to inform their planning of the subsequent lesson
- Regularly mark students' work (key tasks), highlighting strengths in green and areas to improve in pink, with comments in red pen to encourage students to think about their next steps. In subjects with longer written answers, a success criteria is also provided to show students their precise areas of strength and development. We also expect all teachers, irrespective of their subject, to mark for literacy; namely, spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Dedicate time to DIRT work (dedicated improvement and reflection time) after marking – teachers address whole class areas of need and students redraft the weaker sections of their work in green pen

Assessing reading

As of September 2025, the standardised reading test to be used is the NGRT.

This is a standardised assessment used by teachers to measure students' reading skills from ages 5 to 16. It assesses both word reading and comprehension through tasks like sentence completion and passage reading, and it can be used to identify students who may need intervention or support and to track their progress over time.

The results provide a [Standard Age Score](#) (SAS), allowing schools to compare a student's performance against the national average. It also provides a reading age and the students' place in the National Percentile Ranking (NPR).

We use the digital version of the test, which is adaptive, adjusting the difficulty of questions in real-time based on the students' answers. It takes about 30 minutes and is administered during an English lesson in examination conditions.

The test includes two main sections:

Sentence completion: Measures decoding ability with some comprehension.

Passage comprehension: Measures a range of comprehension skills.

What the results tell us:

- Reading skills: It provides a detailed picture of a student's strengths and weaknesses in reading.
- Reading vs. comprehension: It helps teachers identify students who are strong decoders but may have weak comprehension skills, or vice versa.

- Progress tracking: By comparing scores from different test administrations, teachers can monitor the impact of any reading interventions.
- Benchmarking: The Standard Age Score (SAS) allows for comparison with the national average, which is 100. Scores below 88 are considered below average, and scores above 112 are above average.
- Reading tests are completed twice a year by Year 7, to identify those in need of intervention and then to track improvement in reading age.
- Once the tests have been sat in September, the non-SEND students in the bottom 35th percentile are identified and re-tested with the NGRT test to ensure accuracy of results. Once a final list of those non-SEND who are in the bottom 35th percentile after the second test has been drawn up, they move into the Probe Blue 1:1 diagnostic testing, to confirm their need for Thinking Reading intervention and where the individualised gaps in their reading are.
- SEND students who are in the bottom 35th percentile will also be identified and will also be further tested, as well as aligned with EHCP/passport needs in terms of identifying those who will then go onto the Project X reading programme.

4.2 In-school summative assessment

Effective in-school summative assessment enables:

- **School leaders** to monitor the performance of pupil cohorts, identify where interventions may be required, and work with teachers to ensure pupils are supported to achieve sufficient progress and attainment.
- **Teachers** to evaluate learning at the end of a unit or period, and the impact of their own teaching.
- **Pupils** to understand how well they have learned and understood a topic or course of work taught over a period of time. It should be used to provide feedback on how they can improve.
- **Parents/carers** to stay informed about the achievement, progress and wider outcomes of their child across a period.

In order to summatively assess pupils, **senior leaders**:

- Stipulate formal assessment points for each year group, ensuring a staggered approach between year groups to account for teacher wellbeing and workload. Each year group has two formal assessment points in the academic year, points at which we record and analyse students' performance data.
- Ensure that KS4 students are well prepared for the demands of national examinations (GCSE and BTEC) by arranging KS4 summative assessments to be sat as formal mock examinations.
- Work with middle leaders to design effective summative assessments that capture the knowledge and skills students should have acquired up to that point.
- Train middle leaders in conducting effective standardisation and moderation processes with the teachers in their department.
- Train middle leaders in gathering and analysing data, in particular, trends across time, key performance indicators such as disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, comparisons with other classes, with previous cohorts and with other subjects.
- Develop middle leaders' ability to identify changes they may need to make to curriculum and/or staff training in order to improve students' achievement.

In order to summatively assess pupils, **teachers**:

- Deliver the assessment created by the middle leader (head of department) and senior leader. Summative assessments are completed like examinations: closed book, in a separate exercise book, within a fixed time frame, and all students in the year group sit the same assessment (exceptions to this are Maths, Science and Languages at KS4, where students complete Higher or Foundation style questions depending on their target and likely tiering in Year 11).
- Participate in standardisation and moderation to ensure their marking is fair and accurate
- Mark students' assessments, highlighting strengths in green and areas to improve in pink, with comments in red pen to encourage students to think about their next steps. In subjects with longer

written answers, a success criteria is also provided to show students their precise areas of strength and development.

- Will use GCSE criteria to grade KS4 summative assessments.
- Dedicate time to DIRT work (dedicated improvement and reflection time) after marking – teachers address whole class areas of need and students redraft the weaker sections of their work in green pen.
- Record pupils' achievement by entering their marks into Pupil Progress.

Assessment Books

All pupils receive a beige assessment book in each subject. Pupils complete all summative assessments and feedback from those assessments within these assessment books. The assessment books are issued to all pupils in each subject at the start of their time at Southchurch, and they move with the pupils throughout their school career. For example, a Year 7 pupil could have the same assessment book in Maths from Year 7 through to Year 11, only receiving a new book when the previous one is complete.

4.3 Nationally standardised summative assessment

Nationally standardised summative assessment enables:

- **School leaders** to monitor the performance of pupil cohorts, identify where interventions may be required, and work with teachers to ensure pupils are supported to achieve sufficient progress and attainment;
- **Teachers** to understand national and local expectations and assess students' performance in light of the broader national and local context;
- **Pupils and parents/carers** to understand how pupils are performing in comparison with pupils nationally and locally; and
- Nationally standardised summative assessments take the form of GCSEs and vocational qualifications at the end of Key Stage 4.

5. Collecting and using data

We collect and use assessment data in a variety of ways.

- By using students' scores from their SATs taken in Year 6, as well as their reading ages which we gather from the results of the NGRT reading test, we use a 'flight path' method to determine what they could achieve in their GCSEs at the end of Year 11. These grades become their targets.
- Students' performance in key tasks is currently recorded in departmental spreadsheets, which is the responsibility of the head of department to create, maintain, analyse and take any action they deem necessary (such as curriculum revisions, editing schemes for learning, learning walks, work scrutinies).
- Students' performance in summative assessments is recorded in Pupil Progress. Teachers input the marks their students achieve in the assessment directly into their class on the platform. One very useful feature, especially for KS4, is the RAG-rating system, which allows teachers to see whether their students have performed below, as expected or exceeded their target.

6. Artificial intelligence (AI)

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools are now widespread and easy to access. Staff, pupils and parents/carers may be familiar with generative chatbots such as ChatGPT and Google Gemini. Whilst Southchurch recognises that AI has many uses to help pupils learn, it may also lead to cheating and plagiarism.

Pupils **may not** use AI tools:

- During assessments, including internal and external assessments, and coursework.
- To write any homework or class assignments, where they present AI-generated material as their own work

Pupils **may** use AI tools:

- As a research tool to help them find out about new topics and ideas.
- When specifically studying and discussing AI in schoolwork, for example in IT lessons or a topic in Art about AI-generated images. All AI-generated content must be properly cited.

7. Reporting to parents/carers

Parents are regularly informed of their child's progress. Each assessment point in the year (two at KS3 and three at KS4) generates achievement data about pupils that is then collated into a report and sent home.

In this report, parents will find:

- Each subject their child is studying.
- Their child's target grade.
- The progress their child is making towards this target, indicated by descriptors: exceeding, on target, working towards and below target.
- Their child's attendance to date (%).

Parents are also invited to Parents' Evenings during the year (two for Year 11, after each set of mock examinations) to discuss their child's progress with his/her individual subject teachers. During these conversations, teachers will discuss with parents' things like their child's attendance, attitude to learning, effort put into classwork and homework, what they are doing outside of school to develop their knowledge and skills, and how parents can support their child at home to continue making progress.

8. Inclusion

The principles of this assessment policy apply to all pupils, including those with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND).

Assessment will be used diagnostically to contribute to the early and accurate identification of pupils' special educational needs and any requirements for support and intervention.

We will use meaningful ways of measuring all aspects of students' progress, including communication, social skills, physical development, resilience and independence. We have the same high expectations of all our pupils and their achievement.

For pupils working below the national expected level of attainment, our assessment arrangements will consider progress relative to pupil starting points, and take this into account alongside the nature of pupils' learning difficulties.

9. Training

Southchurch's approach to professional training, at all levels, is that it must be useful and effective in improving teachers' practices, whilst respecting teacher wellbeing and workload. As such, we strive for the below features in all our staff training:

- Safe environment – teachers feel comfortable sharing ideas and reflections
- Planned like a lesson – models good practice
- Targets a specific area of improvement in the school/subject
- Sequenced – one session informs the next to create a cohesive sequence of professional learning; not isolated/one off sessions
- Evidence informed
- Opportunities for collaboration with colleagues both within and outside teachers' specialist subjects; training is done *with* them, not *to* them
- Reflective – staff think about their own teaching practice and how to improve
- Opportunities for application – staff get to use the professional learning they receive
- Motivational and uplifting – staff feel energised and determined to improve their teaching practice

With this in mind, leaders continue to enhance their knowledge of assessment, in order to develop our staff's understanding of:

- Effective assessment practices and standards, in general and subject specific
- What good feedback to students entails
- How students can effectively respond to feedback to boost their progress

Leaders do this by:

- Keeping up to date with the latest research on assessment e.g. the benefits and pitfalls of AI in assessing students' work
- Designing professional learning that improves the way teachers assess students
- Analysing data from national examinations to identify gaps in our assessment strategy and inform our next steps at a whole school level e.g. comparison of results with local and national averages, examiners reports, exams feedback sessions
- Encouraging middle leaders to do the same within their specific subject - identify gaps in their departmental assessment strategy and inform their next steps at a departmental level
- Encouraging middle leaders to engage with examinations data, examiners reports and feedback (and other training) sessions run by the exam board and other professional bodies, and use this to inform curriculum changes and further staff development required

10. Roles and responsibilities

10.1 Governors

Governors are responsible for:

- Being familiar with statutory assessment systems, as well as how the school's own system of non-statutory assessment captures the attainment and progress of all pupils.
- Holding school leaders to account for improving pupil and staff performance by rigorously analysing assessment data.
- Monitoring that school staff are receiving the appropriate support and training on pupil assessment, to ensure consistent application and good practice across the school.

10.2 Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Ensuring this policy is adhered to.
- Monitoring standards in core and foundation subjects.
- Analysing pupil progress and attainment, including individual pupils and specific groups.
- Prioritising key actions to address underachievement.
- Reporting to governors on all key aspects of pupil progress and attainment, including current standards and trends over previous years.
- Making sure arrangements are in place so teachers can conduct assessment, marking and feedback competently and confidently, including training and moderation opportunities

10.3 Assessment lead

The assessment lead is responsible for:

- Supporting the headteacher with assessment responsibilities.
- Professional learning for middle leaders/subject specialists on how assessment points should be planned and delivered and, for teachers, how to get pupils to the assessment points.
- Tracking completed assessments and making sure they are moderated, data is collected and teachers respond to the results appropriately.

10.4 Teachers

Teachers are responsible for:

- Following the assessment procedures outlined in this policy, including for effective marking and feedback.
- Creating and sharing clear mark schemes for the purposes of moderation.

- Being familiar with the standards for the subjects they teach.
- Keeping up to date with developments in assessment practice

11. Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed annually by the assessment lead. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.

All teaching staff are expected to read and follow this policy. All leaders are responsible for ensuring that the policy is followed.

The headteacher, together with the teaching and learning team will monitor the effectiveness of assessment practices across the school, through:

- Learning walks
- Book looks and work scrutinies
- Staff and student voice
- Standardisation and moderation
- Data analysis
- Student outcomes