



Assessment for Learning Parents' Guide



At Matthew Arnold School we wish to provide the very best learning experiences for all our students. This leaflet gives information about one focus for better learning called Assessment for Learning (AfL).

The Principles of AfL

Research shows us that students learn best when:

- they know what they are going to learn
- they know how they are going to learn
- they know how they will be assessed
- they know how to meet the criteria for assessment

In lessons this means that teachers give students more information about what they are going to learn (the **learning objectives**) and use more strategies to actively engage them in learning. Teachers use a variety of ways to assess the progress students make and students are part of the process.

What does AfL look like in a lesson?

There is a clear focus on exactly what is being taught. Students are told the learning outcomes (sometimes called 'WALT' or 'We Are Learning To...') so they know exactly what they are learning. Questioning, marking and feedback will all be focussed on checking that all students are achieving these lesson objectives.

Teachers may also give students guidance about what their work should include (sometimes called 'WILF' or 'What I'm

Looking For'). This tells students what they need to achieve to be successful in their learning and may be linked to exam criteria.



To help students, many classes use 'must, should, could' statements. These tell a child what they **must achieve** in their work, what they **should add** if they are able to, and what they **could do** to improve their work further.

Assessment happens throughout each lesson. We use a variety of ways to do this:



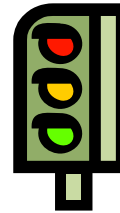
- **Thumbs Up**

Students use their thumbs to show their own level of understanding. This is instant so teachers can provide extra help during a lesson to support those who need it.

- **Traffic Lights**

Students show a card or draw a circle at the end of their work to show their level of understanding:

- | | |
|-------|--|
| Green | Got it! |
| Amber | Not quite there; I need more practice. |
| Red | I don't understand this yet. |



This is most successful when reviewing the learning for a lesson. Teachers get an immediate indication of students' understanding, feelings and general confidence levels.

- **Individual whiteboards**

Following a question from the teacher, all the students hold up their answer on an individual whiteboard.



This allows the teacher to

make a quick assessment of their progress and identify those who are ready to move on and those who may need extra help.

- **No Hands Up**

Rather than asking a question and getting the answer from someone who puts their hand up, teachers direct questions at specific students to check how much they understand. This means students don't need to put their hand up! Teachers often wait longer for answers, giving students thinking time.

- **Peer Assessment**

This is when another student decides how successful your child has been in learning the lesson. They can highlight successful areas and others that need improvement. At the same time your child will assess another student's work. This helps students learn about how their work is assessed and what they need to include to gain a higher mark.

- **Self-Assessment**

Your child decides how successful they were with their learning. They may use the 'Must, Should, Could' targets, the original learning objectives, or criteria set by an exam board. They may be asked to set themselves targets for their next piece of work.

- **Talk Partners**

Students may discuss their work with a talk partner chosen by the teacher. Comments may include examples of what has been learnt, what was easy or difficult to understand and what they want to know next. Teachers use this to build students' confidence and will listen in on conversations to gain an overview of students' learning.



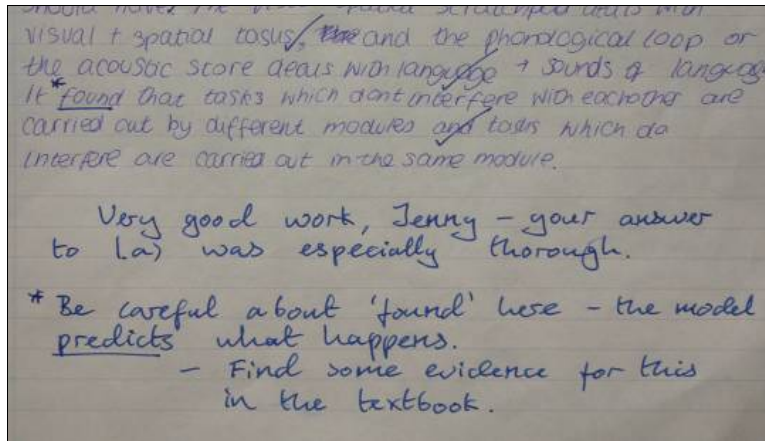
Will there still be tests?

Yes. Tests and exams are still an important way of monitoring students' progress and preparing them for the exam conditions they experience in Key Stage 3 Tests, GCSEs and A Levels. Formal tests are sometimes called **Assessment of Learning**. After a test the teacher will give extensive feedback, not just a score or grade. This feedback will include information on how the answers were marked and targets for improvement. In this way the test becomes part of learning.

I need to read more carefully ~~too~~ because I didn't read question ten carefully enough.

What about marking?

Marking has to help the child get better at what they are trying to learn. Extensive research has shown that just a grade, score or comment such as 'good' or 'well done' doesn't do this. Good marking tells the child **what they have learned** and **what they need to improve** to do even better.



Marking like this can be:

- Given in a lesson to give the child time to make improvements right away, or written after the lesson.
- Given orally in a lesson, so you may see no written comment after some pieces of work.
- Given by the teacher, teaching assistant, the child themselves or one of their class mates.

Everyone is comparing the work to what the teacher was teaching, so marking is very specific and much more useful.

Things you might notice

- Marking will look different; sometimes there will be extensive comments and targets for improvement. At other times there may be no written marking, or just a tick to indicate that work is complete.
- Coloured circles might be drawn at the end of a piece of work, or on a separate sheet or booklet.
- Other children might have written in your child's book.
- Your child might have learning objectives or 'must, should, could' targets at the start of a piece of work.
- There may be 'post-it' notes stuck in your child's book.
- Your child might talk about 'traffic lights', 'thumbs up' or 'talk partners'.

How can you help?

1. Take an active interest in your child's work. Ask them to show you their work and celebrate their successes.
2. Help them present their work so it will be useful for revision later.
3. Check that they understand their improvement targets.
4. Use their planner to communicate with their tutor if you have comments, questions or concerns.

If you have any questions about Assessment for Learning at Matthew Arnold School, please see your child's tutor for further information.

***Alternatively, e-mail Mr Marshall at:
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