



Parents' Guide to Assessment For Learning



'Teachers' use of assessment information ... consistency of approach, and the degree to which it drives planning and teaching strategies in lessons, are strengths of the school.'

Ofsted 2011

The Principles of AfL

Research shows 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

This booklet gives a guide to how students experience Assessment for Learning practice at Carshalton High School For Girls and how parents might notice the impact of this on their daughter's work.

What does AfL look like in a lesson?

There is a clear focus on exactly what is being taught. Students are told the learning objectives and outcomes 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. This tells students what they need to achieve to be successful in their learning.

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 to show their level of understanding:

Green: Got it!

Amber: Not quite there; I need more practice.

Red: I don't understand this yet.

Teachers get an immediate indication of students' understanding, feelings and general confidence levels. Student's Planners contain a set of cards for this purpose.

- **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**

Another student decides how successful your daughter's learning has been. They highlight successful areas and others that need improvement. At the same time your daughter will assess another student's work. Comments are usually preceded by 'www' (what went well) and 'ebi' (even better if). This helps students to learn about how their work is assessed and what they need to include to gain a higher mark

- **Self-Assessment**

Your daughter decides how successful she was with her learning. She may use the original learning objectives, level descriptions or criteria set by an exam board. She may be asked to set herself targets for her next piece of work.

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 GCSEs and A Levels. Formal tests are sometimes called Assessment of Learning. After an important test the teacher will give extensive feedback, not just a score or grade.

What about marking?

Marking helps students 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 students 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 students 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, the student themselves or one of their class mates.

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

Things you might notice

- Marking will look different; sometimes there will be extensive comments and targets for improvement. At other times there may just be a tick to indicate that work is complete.
- Other students might have written in your daughter's book.
- There may be 'post-it' notes stuck in your daughter's book.
- Your daughter might talk about 'traffic lights' or 'thumbs up'

How can parents help?

1. Take an active interest in your daughter's work. Ask her to show you her work and celebrate her successes.
2. Check that your daughter understands her improvement targets.
3. Use your daughter's planner to communicate with her tutor if you have comments, questions or concerns.

If you have any questions about Assessment for Learning please contact your daughter's tutor or e-mail Mr Sambrook at: msambrook@suttonlea.org