

Preformal Assessment Development

Following the Rochford review and Engagement Model 2020 guidance, we reflected on how best to assess our students working at the earliest level.

“Schools do not have to submit data about the achievements and progress of each pupil working below the overall standard of the national curriculum assessments and not engaged in subject-specific study. This is because the progress that these pupils make will be personal to them, and it is not possible to meaningfully consider data for these pupils”

Engagement Model, 2020

This gave us the opportunity to consider how best to monitor the learning of our students and expand our thinking beyond rigid assessment tools. All too often, our students’ demonstrate unpredictable and complex progress which standard tools are unable to capture. Our PMLD teachers gathered to discuss this and explored different assessment tools and weighed up the benefits of each.

We gather detailed narrative data for our learners using written daily logs and photographic and video evidence through Earwig Academic. This qualitative information then feeds into the annual review cycle and informs the Education, Health and Care Plans. To tighten this cycle, we designed our own ipsative assessment tool linked to the EHCP areas where teachers have the autonomy to set individual learning goals for their students. These goals are summarised on a one page profile which is stored in the student’s daily log file.

The learning goals will cover five areas with two or three goals per area set:

- Communication and interaction
- Cognition and learning
- Sensory and physical
- Social, emotional and mental health
- Lifelong learning

Lifelong learning will cover those key skills we want all our learners to leave school with; the ability to attract attention, show a preference, communicate feelings and be as independent as possible within the context of their needs.

Learning goals will not cover a set time period, some may run a month, some a year. The important part is that the targets are **individual**, **aspirational** and **frequently reviewed** to ensure they remain appropriate. Each half term, teachers will complete a learning summary for the term - this documents individual progress towards each of the five areas. Teachers then participate in a review with SLT/MLT to discuss learning goals, progress towards these and available evidence. Teachers are encouraged to reflect on the targets frequently and change them as needed – they do not need to wait for the review to make changes. The aim of this assessment model is to empower teachers to follow their initiative without losing their accountability for teaching and learning.

To support teachers in setting their learning goals, we have developed learning journey maps. These have a series of statements which can be adapted and used as learning goals. These statements are drawn from Development Matters, Routes for Learning and Cherry Garden School branch maps. The five areas of engagement; awareness, realisation, initiation, anticipation and persistence, also link into these branch maps through a colour coded system.

Each term, an engagement champion for each of the five areas of engagement will be chosen from all students participating in this assessment. At the end of each school year, the student who has received the most champion awards, will receive the Gold engagement award for the year.

During the process we consulted and attended training with a number of other specialist schools to discuss their assessment processes; Percy Hedley School, Chailey Heritage School, Sunningdale School, Hadrian School and Langside School.

Ros Field September 2021