



Assessment Policy

Purpose of the policy

At Wildwood Nature School, assessing children's learning is central to how we operate. Our whole approach is aimed at offering children a personalised learning experience; one where they feel excited by learning, challenged, competent and empowered. This policy will describe the methods we use to assess children's learning and impact of our curriculum, but at the heart of assessment, is the relationship between our children and their teachers. We dedicate a great deal of our time towards fostering compassionate relationships where each child is known in depth. Assessment arises naturally out of this relationship: our teachers will be continuously assessing, adapting, responding to and planning for our children's needs.

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1. Assessment tools

Below is a summary of the assessment tools we use to measure the impact of our curriculum, our teaching and children's learning, as well as our methods of communicating to families how their children are doing. Each of these will be discussed in more detail in later sections.

- [Tapestry Journal](#) - continuous
- Learning journeys - half-termly, linked to cross-curricular projects

- Project presentations - half-termly
- Child-family-teacher meetings - termly
- Written report - annual
- Informal family discussions with teachers - continuous

2. Formative assessment

Formative assessment describes the process of assessing 'on-the-go' - where teachers continuously observe their students, make quick evaluations against learning objectives, and respond and adapt to children's needs then and there. It is the assessment approach most suited to young children, because their needs and readiness for learning can change from day to day, based on a huge variety of factors from mood to hunger. In fact, the way we assess at Wildwood Nature School is very much influenced by the Early Years model. In the EYFS, assessment is all about observation and planning in the moment to adapt to children's interests and needs. Teachers have the knowledge of learning objectives in mind, so can quickly identify any children who are falling behind expectations and might need extra support. We use this approach in Reception and all the way up to Year 6 because we feel we can best support all of our learners this way.

Formative assessment also provides plenty of opportunity for the teacher to give feedback to their learners. This feedback is best when it is a 2-way process so that the learner can be involved in the assessment process. The teacher can ask questions about why a child has decided to do something that way or their thinking behind their choices, which might further inform their assessment and how they can support or challenge the child. It is also incredibly helpful for the child to receive feedback about their progress in the moment, so that they can reflect on how they want to progress their learning. Of course, teachers will always be sensitive to whether or not the moment is right for any feedback or conversation; sometimes quiet observation is the most effective method.

Teachers will use formative assessment to ensure that children are knowing and remembering more, particularly when it comes to the automatic recall of key things. We teach children things like times tables because we know that the ability to automatically recall such items frees up working memory to learn new things. When teachers assess such knowledge, they can quickly discover any gaps and plan different ways to ensure that children have grasped key concepts. This might involve different types of activities and methods for different children and our high staff:child ratios allow for this.

This approach also means that teachers can very quickly identify any children who might be showing signs of having additional or special needs. Some learning needs can be harder to detect without this deeper focus on continuous assessment. With our school's attention on fostering strong relationships between children and their teachers, and our commitment to

continuous and close assessment, we believe we will identify any needs early and be able to adapt our planning and offering to best meet those needs. See our *SEND Policy*.

3. Our teaching, learning and evaluation process

Phonics, literacy and maths are taught daily in small groups. While we teach core skills within these subjects discretely, the skills and some of the themes will link into and be incorporated into our half-termly topics. Teacher assessment will be formative and ongoing; the benefit of small group teaching for these skills is that teachers can observe children closely to ensure that they are learning at the right pace for them. They can adapt their teaching to ensure coverage of any gaps in knowledge and skills, or increase the challenge as appropriate. The teachers will use the following schemes to assess how children are progressing against National Curriculum objectives:

- [White Rose](#) for maths
- [Little Wandle](#) for phonics and early reading
- [Literary Curriculum](#) for literacy
- [Collins Big Cat](#) for reading in Phases 2 & 3

Science, history, geography, art, music, DT, and ICT are taught through our cross-curricular projects. Each half-term a new topic is introduced. Teachers spend 2-3 weeks immersing the children in relevant content, creating inspiring experiences that encourage children to explore the various aspects of the topic. The children can then choose one aspect or area of learning they are most interested in to explore deeper. They can work individually or in small groups to ideate, iterate, create, problem-solve and possibly produce a final product. Children will record their project work in their Learning Journeys - a physical project book, although they will have the opportunity to record digitally as well (e.g. photos, videos etc.). At the end of the half term, they have an opportunity to teach the other children about what they have learnt and present their projects and learning to their families and the wider community. Throughout the project work, teachers will always be on hand to support, guide and challenge the children as appropriate, based on their formative assessments. The final product or presentation is an opportunity for evaluating children's learning and development journey over the half term. Teachers will use the assessment criteria within each discipline using the [Engaging Science](#) and [Kapow Primary](#) schemes to assess children's learning and progress against the National Curriculum objectives.

Our cross-curricular curriculum works on a spiral basis: each topic is revisited every 2 years, so that children approach the same topic at ever deepening levels of inquiry. At the start of each revisited topic, teachers will assess children's prior knowledge and whether any gaps in knowledge or misconceptions need addressing. This approach ensures that teachers have a

clear understanding of children's knowledge and skills and can then adapt planning to meet any gaps or misconceptions.

Well-being and PE are taught discretely and children will be assessed against the relevant criteria within those disciplines, using the [Kapow Primary](#) and [peplanning](#) resources as well as the further well-being assessment tools described below. Both well-being and physical activity are integral to our school, and are woven into our day-to-day ways of being, and will also come into the cross-curricular project work.

We record each child's learning and development journey across all disciplines using [Tapestry Journal](#). This allows progress against National Curriculum objectives, along with teacher comments and examples of children's work to be collated in one place. Parents have access to this so that they can see how their children are doing.

Our Forest School curriculum (the [WILD Passport](#)) offers individual passports for children to evaluate their progress and skill development against the curriculum objectives.

4. EYFS

Reception-aged children follow the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and teachers assess them against the Development Matters framework (2021). The process of formative assessment is exactly the same as for our older children, except that our youngest children are not required to do a project for each topic. They are welcome to if they choose to, but are free to play and explore independently if they prefer. At the end of the Reception year, teachers will complete an EYFS profile which shows whether children have met each of the Early Learning Goals within the 7 areas of learning:

- communication and language
- physical development
- personal, social and emotional development
- literacy
- mathematics
- understanding the world
- expressive arts and design

Children's learning and development journey during EYFS will also be recorded on the Tapestry Journal.

5. Empowering children to self-assess

One of our core values at Wildwood Nature School is empowering our children. This means giving them the knowledge and tools to be able to evaluate and assess their own learning and development. While we do not want to stress children out by making them too aware of the various national guidelines and expectations, we think it is important that they have a say in what and how they learn. We do this in various ways:

- When teachers are introducing a new topic and offering the immersive learning experiences that will inspire children to explore their own projects, lessons are planned using National Curriculum objectives. Teachers will present multiple options within each lesson objective and children can choose their own learning goals from within them and then evaluate themselves against the goals - have they learned what they set out to learn? How have they improved? Is there anything else they want to learn about?
- When children choose their own projects, working individually or in groups, they can set their own learning goals and any criteria to meet those learning goals. They are then well set up to be able to evaluate their learning against the goals and criteria they set for themselves.

There are certain skills required to be able to set learning goals and criteria and then be able to evaluate against them; children will be explicitly taught these skills and gradually supported with this process by their teachers, so that as they move through the school, they are more and more able to assess their own learning and feel empowered by the process.

The children also have a say in what they learn (choosing their area of focus for the projects), what they put in their Learning Journey books, and how to present their learning at the end of a topic (they can give a presentation, do a play, make a piece of music, make an object or any other modality that suits their learning style and the project content).

We also believe that by explicitly teaching children about how learning happens in the brain, using the latest research from the world of neuroscience through our well-being curriculum, children take even more ownership over their own learning. As well as teaching metacognition, our well-being curriculum also teaches about different learning styles, multiple intelligences, motivation and the process of flow. By giving children access to this knowledge, traditionally known only by the teacher, we hope that each child gets to know their own learning processes and knows that however they learn is natural and best for them.

We know that children learn better from their peers than from adults, so we want to harness that power at our school. By the nature of how we operate, our children might all be learning slightly different things at different times. So at the end of each half term, children have the opportunity to teach each other and to give feedback to each other on their projects and learning. Our well-being curriculum teaches children how to communicate

using compassionate/Giraffe language. This way of communicating is an incredibly useful tool for being able to give effective feedback to others. We want our children to be able not only to assess their own learning, but also to assess their peers' learning and to give useful feedback to them.

Children at Wildwood Nature School even run their own parent-teacher meetings. We call them child-family-teacher meetings because the meetings are about, and run by, each child. These meetings are directed by each child (with prompts as necessary for younger children) so that it's the child who takes ownership of their own evaluation and the process of reporting it to their families. It's a 3-way conversation to remove any sense of judgement of the child. And more importantly, it's a celebration of what each child has learnt and a joint collaboration to think about what their next steps are.

6. End of term/year assessments and communication with families

We do not believe in formal assessment tools such as examinations at Wildwood Nature School, so children will not be doing things like the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check or KS1 and KS2 SATs. Such assessments only offer a snapshot of what a child can do on that day, and even then, they are not accurate representations of a child's learning and development. If a child has had a bad night's sleep or just had a fight with a sibling, the child will not 'perform' well and the test will not show what they are actually capable of. Furthermore, these sorts of tests only assess a tiny fraction of intelligence, they do not even begin to capture the full scope of a child's true abilities and potential. They create unnecessary stress for children, families and teachers.

As explained above, our approach is one of continuous and formative assessment based within the context of trusted relationships. Teachers will give feedback regularly to the children on their own progress, as well as to families through Tapestry Journal and regular and informal conversations. At the end of each term, families are invited to a child-family-teacher meeting, led by the children themselves. They will communicate to their families what they have learnt and how they have assessed themselves against their own learning goals. Their teacher will support this conversation as appropriate.

At the end of the year, families have the option to receive a written report from their child's teacher or have a meeting with the teacher.

7. Well-being assessment

Well-being is truly at the heart of everything we do at Wildwood Nature School. While we believe that understanding each child's state of well-being is a part of the close relationships they will have with their teachers, we can also see the benefit of using certain tools to assess well-being.

We use the [Boxall Profile](#) to help teachers identify and support any children who might have additional needs. The Boxall Profile is a psychosocial assessment tool used to help determine children's emotional functioning, well-being and identifying learning or other needs.

We want children to be able to assess their own well-being too. Along with the tools we teach them in our well-being curriculum to do this, we also use the [Pictured Child's Quality of Life Self Questionnaire](#). This allows for children's subjective views of their own well-being to be expressed and recorded.

We have decided to use our well-being assessment tools to show families and the wider public how Wildwood Nature School is meeting its aims and how the children are progressing against those aims.

Policy review

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