



Ark Charter  
Academy

# ASSESSMENT: RATIONALE AND PRINCIPLES

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## 1 OUR CONTEXT

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Our school vision is that all our students achieve their full potential. We are committed to delivering an outstanding education within a nurturing environment where each child is able to achieve the highest possible academic outcomes. We want our students to progress to university, or a career of their choice to lead happy, purposeful lives.

*“We want every student to become compassionate, academically successful, valued members of our community”.*

The school Ofsted report from December 2016 highlighted that there were some clear areas for development with regards to assessment. The report noted that: ‘Frequent assessment is not being used to help teachers plan the next steps in pupils’ learning. In a few cases, pupils are not acting on the useful feedback given to improve their work’.

Since this inspection there have however been emerging practices which have continued to be embedded across all key stages and in most subjects. School leaders

have been utilising unseen assessments produced by the central network team in different subject areas. These assessments are then moderated within the Ark network to ensure that assessment is accurate. The data generated is being increasingly effectively used to help make decisions about teaching and learning.

The school's most recent 'Ark Schools Review' (formally monitoring visits) highlighted that there had been improvement since previous visits and that 'there is now a greater sense of purpose and a stronger sense of direction'. Whilst assessment was not a focus of this visit some clear areas of development can be extrapolated which include the variability in the ways in which data is used across the academy to drive progress and how mastery is achieved through curriculum design. It was reported that 'there was inconsistency in classes seen in the checking of pupils recall' and that 'feedback given to students in some cases is variable'.

This document aims to detail the rationale and principles behind the different methods of assessment used at Ark Charter Academy.

## 2 Vision & values

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We embody our vision by adopting the three values: **Justice, Courage and Respect**.

### 2.1 OUR VISION

*"We want every student to become compassionate, academically successful, valued members of our community".*

### 2.2 OUR SIX CHARTER SKILLS

We are committed to ensuring that the Charter community of staff and students live by these values and promote them through our every day lives, whilst also promoting the six Charter skills:



**Honesty** – Charter students have the courage to be honest, having faith in forgiveness.



**Kindness** – Charter students respect themselves and each other, always showing kindness.



**Independence** – Charter students have the courage to strive to find solutions by themselves.



**Team Work** – Charter students respect the opinions of others and excel at working with each other.



**Determination** – Charter students never give up.



**Responsibility** – Charter students understand the justice in accepting responsibility for their actions.

## 2.3 OUR CURRICULUM

**Our curriculum design enables pupils to develop a framework of knowledge and understanding in each subject area that provides a solid foundation for further study.**

Our curriculum is planned backwards from university in each subject area, ensuring pupils master key learning before moving on. It is a knowledge rich curriculum where what pupils are learning about is as important as the skills they are developing. Our children join us at very different starting points, we assess them on entry and ensure that our curriculum meets their needs whilst holding the same high expectations for every child.

**Assessments test mastery of the content by requiring pupils to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and application independently and in unseen contexts. Exam periods are held three times a year. End of year exams test mastery of the whole year's learning.**

Revision is built into the curriculum because new problems are designed to draw upon and utilise prior learning. The focus on developing depth of understanding and mastery means that pupils experience the deep satisfaction derived from grappling with and grasping challenging content, which in turn supports the development of a growth mindset. It also means that they are developing a solid framework of understanding and set of skills that support all future learning in that subject area. The rigour of the curriculum is reflected in the curriculum planning documents, high quality teaching, pupil work and the feedback that pupils receive.

## High Quality Teaching

Teachers are subject experts with an excellent understanding of the intellectual journey they are taking their pupils on and master the teaching skills to support this. Teachers are encouraged and given the opportunity to develop their own subject knowledge through allocated co-planning periods. Teachers use the school routines to create an excellent climate for learning and to ensure that pupils make exceptional progress. Lessons are never task driven; they are planned using the most effective methods to engage with the content. They are underpinned by high expectations, from the use of academic language, grammatical precision and level of rigour expected in pupil responses. The atmosphere is one of excitement as teachers display and elicit a passion for their subject and for learning more generally. Our teachers have excellent subject knowledge and their understanding of the curriculum is detailed, meaning that they recognise how the learning fits into the pupils' broader development within the subject. **Teachers engage with the knowledge being developed and understand the crux of the lesson. This allows them to be very responsive in the classroom, always able to ask the most important questions, pick out the most important points, identify the underlying misconceptions that are holding pupils back and give meaningful feedback that moves pupils forward.** Our teachers ensure all pupils master the key concepts and skills required for each unit before moving on. Errors are opportunities and emphasis is placed on growth rather than attainment. All classrooms and all teaching is a team effort, with each individual practitioner delivering planning that is the result of a collaborative process and developing facilitation skills that are part of our collective approach as a school.

## 3 ARK CHARTER ACADEMY CURRICULUM INTENT - ASSESSMENT

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As part of Ark Charter Academy's codified curriculum intent statement, the aims for assessment are set out.

### 3.1 CHARTER CURRICULUM INTENT STATEMENT

How our school's curriculum is designed to meet the needs of Charter pupils in our context to ensure that pupils secure the best possible outcomes regardless of their background.

### 3.2 CHARTER CURRICULUM INTENT

**Mastery:** Pupils build knowledge of the key learning in a particular subject in a coherent and carefully sequenced way to develop a mental model towards expertise. We have a three-year key stage three to allow pupils time to build knowledge in all subjects.

Planned backwards: We want our pupils to have a choice to attend the best universities in the country or enter a career of their choice, so we plan back from this aim. Each subject discipline will aim for pupils to develop a mental model of carefully organised knowledge by the time they leave Charter, to be developed in the next phase of study. This is planned by subject experts as a narrative structured over time.

Knowledge-rich: Subject experts chose the powerful knowledge for their disciplines to take pupils beyond their own experiences, giving them an education founded on academic excellence. The key learning is carefully codified and structured over time, allowing pupils to establish effective mental models that they can continue to develop beyond their time at Charter. A curriculum full of powerful knowledge is a hugely powerful tool of social justice, aiming to create socially mobile young people by giving them the opportunities to pursue careers they are passionate about.

**Assessment: Formatively assessing our pupils throughout the year allows for responsive teaching – using the mastery approach teachers are confident when re-teaching and revisiting knowledge to develop pupils’ mental models. Departments coordinate their formative assessment at regular intervals, once every three weeks for English, Maths and Science and once every six weeks for all other subjects – and to be responsive with teaching as a consequence. Accurate summative assessment sampling the work completed over a year – with reference to work completed in previous years – allows inferences about attainment and progress to be made, which are shared with parents.**

Revision built-in: Our approach means that we regularly revisit knowledge before adding new knowledge to build up pupils’ mental models. Opportunities for revision are built into the curriculum. This approach also benefits pupils joining the school as they need support to begin developing their mental models in different subject disciplines.

Reading: We recognise that the success of our mission rests on pupils’ ability to become proficient and fluent readers. Pupils’ capacity to build subject-specific mental models is bound inexorably to their capacity to read. Alongside our approach to knowledge we use different techniques to support pupils in reading more challenging texts, including decoding strategies when necessary. We explicitly teach subject-specific vocabulary to enrich pupils’ knowledge and understanding of the world.

Wider curriculum: Our pupil’s entitlement to a rich and varied curriculum isn’t limited to subjects. We know our pupils’ context means they do not have access to the same wider development opportunities as their peers so our curriculum includes enrichment – academic, sporting, and personal development. They are also formally taught character and PSHE, as well as current affairs so that they are able to understand, and play an active role in, the world around them.

## **4 TYPES OF ASSESSMENT AT CHARTER**

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### **4.1 ASSESSMENT – CURRICULUM INTENT STATEMENT**

Formatively assessing our pupils throughout the year allows for responsive teaching – using the mastery approach teachers are confident when re-teaching and revisiting knowledge to develop pupils’ mental models. Departments coordinate their formative assessments year groups to infer where pupils are in relation to where they should be – and to be responsive with teaching as a consequence. Accurate summative assessment sampling the work completed over a year – with reference to work completed in previous years – allows inferences about attainment and progress to be made, which are shared with parents.

### **4.2 TYPES OF ASSESSMENT**

This intent statement identifies three different types of assessment that are used at Charter:

1. Formative assessment/responsive teaching & low stakes quizzing
2. Coordinated formative assessment –hinge points
3. Summative assessment – End of Year Assessments

Different types of assessment are used at different times and with different purposes – this will vary depending on the year group. The outcome/reporting will also vary depending on the particular group.

## **5 FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT/RESPONSIVE TEACHING – LOW STAKES QUIZZING**

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### **5.1 WHAT IS FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT/RESPONSIVE TEACHING?**

Formative assessment is like a pilot constantly taking readings about their position as they fly, to check they are on course. It’s too late if the pilot flies somewhere and finds that they’re at the wrong place.

Formative assessment – which Dylan Wiliam said might have better described as responsive teaching – is using information to adapt teaching to adapt the work of pupils to put it back on track; making sure that learning is proceeding in the right direction to support that learning. (Black and Wiliam, 1998). Feedback improves learning by changing pupils’ knowledge, understanding or behaviour – but only if they act on it. (Fletcher-Wood, 2019).

Formative assessment/responsive teaching ‘focuses on what the next steps are’ for pupils. (Booth 2017). Knowing what the pupils know and understand means the

teacher can adapt their teaching as a consequence to enable the pupils to build subject-specific mental models.

## **5.2 WHY IS FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT/RESPONSIVE TEACHING USED?**

Formative assessment is used by individual teachers. Schemes of Learning will include guidance for teachers about the most appropriate time and the most appropriate method of assessment to use at any particular time. There are a number of different reasons behind the use of formative assessment/responsive teaching:

1. Checking what pupils know and understand allows teachers to amend/adapt what they are doing to address any gaps in knowledge or misconceptions that they have identified. Allocated co-planning at Charter facilitates this
2. Giving feedback to pupils allows them to change their knowledge, understanding or behaviour. However, 'information about the gap between actual and reference [desired] levels is considered as feedback only when it is used to alter the gap'. (Sadler, 1989). Therefore, pupils need to do something in response to the feedback – ask 'what did the pupils learn from the feedback?' rather than 'What feedback did pupils get?'
3. Getting the pupils to recall what they know and understand helps to secure knowledge in long-term memory. Teaching is about consolidating connections, not just forging them. (McCrae, 2018). Techniques like retrieval practice and elaboration are used across different subjects at Charter. In the process of trying 'to retrieve it from memory', the pupils 'will build a far stronger memory of it in the long term.' (Henrick, 2018).
4. Formative assessment/responsive teaching is also important in building relationships between the teacher and pupils. This comes from teachers being genuinely attentive to the ways that pupils are developing their mental models. This attentiveness shows that the teacher believes in the pupils, is aware of what they are doing and that they will help them succeed.

## **5.3 WHEN IS FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT/RESPONSIVE TEACHING USED?**

Formative assessment/responsive teaching should be used every lesson – continual checking of pupil understanding, and the addressing of misconceptions facilitates the development of subject-specific mental models.

Rosenshine identified different points within a lesson when formative assessment/responsive teaching should be used:

- Beginning of the lesson – a short review of previous learning to strengthen previous learning and lead to fluent recall. This could include things like:
  - Going over homework and correcting it
  - Review elements of the encapsulating task/exit ticket from the previous lesson and address any errors made
  - Reviewing previously learnt material that needs to be revisited – that is necessary for new knowledge to connect to it and develop the pupils' mental models

- Questions after introducing new material – help pupils practice new information and connect new material to their prior learning. Teachers should follow the presentation of new material with lots of questions in order to get pupils thinking and participating. This also gives feedback to the teacher to see which pupils go it right – and whether it is necessary to re-teach specific elements. Sometimes choral elements may be more appropriate
- Checking for understanding throughout the lesson – checking for pupil understanding at each point can help pupils learn new material with fewer errors. Teachers should frequently check to see if all pupils have learnt new materials. This serves two purposes:
  - Answering questions causes pupils to elaborate on material they have learnt and make connections – developing mental models
  - It alerts the teachers to when parts of the model need to be re-taught
- Independent practice – independent practice allows pupils to review and elaborate, leading to fluency. Research found that when the teacher circulated and monitored the work, pupils were more engaged. The optimal time for teacher-pupil contact was around 30 seconds or less
- Weekly and monthly reviews – pupils need to be involved in extensive practice to develop well-connected and automatic knowledge. The more the pupils rehearse and review information the stronger the connections in the mental model become

#### **5.4 HOW IS IT RECORDED?**

Formative assessment is responsive teaching. No grade is reported but raw marks are centrally stored in spreadsheets. The information is used to achieve a particular purpose (usually informing the teacher of pupil of an action). The aim of the assessment is to improve/develop the pupils' mental model in some way.

## **6 COORDINATED FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT – HINGE POINTS**

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### **6.1 WHAT IS COORDINATED FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT – HINGE POINTS?**

Coordinated formative assessment is a type of formative assessment that is planned and coordinated by the lead planner. The information is still used for the same purpose as other formative assessments – but it is standardised across the particular subject discipline. This allows for inference to be made about the pupil's achievement in relation to the point they are aiming to get to.

Hinge points are formative assessments that the lead planner for a particular section of work includes on the scheme of learning. They will be completed by all pupils for that particular unit, allowing leaders to look at the different work produced by different pupils. Individual pupils will be given feedback by their teacher and will amend subsequent work, in order to apply the feedback. English, Maths and Science

complete a hinge point assessment every three weeks, all other subjects complete one every six weeks.

Departments are in the process of planning their assessment maps carefully, identifying the work that allows that to provide the highest-leverage feedback. The assessments may be standardised and moderated within the department.

Inferences will be made about whether pupils are on track to achieve their target grade for a particular subject at the end of the academic year. More than one hinge point can be used to make these inferences.

Some departments have assessments that are set across the network. These are used as interim assessments.

## **6.2 WHY IS COORDINATED FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT USED?**

Coordinated formative assessment is used to allow comparisons of pupils across a bigger group than an individual class. By comparing the knowledge and understanding of pupils across a year group in individual subjects, leaders can make more inferences. It allows them to:

- Amend teaching can be amended to address any gaps identified in pupil knowledge
- Amend the scheme of learning just completed to address any issues that were noticed in the End of Term assessment (e.g. pupil misconceptions not addressed fully)

Most importantly, pupils are still given feedback on the completed work, which they then use to alter what they do to improve the quality of their next piece of work (or re-do a piece of work already completed).

## **6.3 WHEN IS COORDINATED FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT USED?**

Coordinated formative assessment is used once every three weeks in English, Maths and science and once every 6 weeks in all other subjects for each year group in Key Stage Three, known as hinge points. The End of Year assessment is summative (see next section).

Year 10 follows the same pattern. The End of Year assessment is seen as the beginning of Year 11 assessment and is used to predicted grades (see next section).

Year 11 also have the same hinge points built into schemes of learning, but English and Maths have a (summative) mock paper in Autumn 2, as well as a final (summative) mock paper in Spring 1. Formative inferences are also made from specific sections of these papers.

## **6.4 HOW IS IT RECORDED?**

Details of what the hinge points are to be completed will be recorded on Schemes of Learning and on Assessment maps by the Head of Department.

Hinge points are not recorded centrally – they are formative assessments designed to give the teacher data and elicit a response from the pupil that improves their work.

Hinge points vary depending on the departments. There is no central record of the raw mark/grade. It is not appropriate to award marks to assessments mid-year, that may not look like the final assessment.

Departments will instead record quiz data and store this data in centrally stored spreadsheets to enable structured conversations with key stakeholders around curriculum design, i.e. if a student performs poorly in a quiz and then again in the hinge point what changes need to be made to address knowledge gaps / misconceptions.

## **7 SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT**

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### **7.1 WHAT IS SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT?**

Summative assessment is a type of assessment that is used to identify current pupil attainment and progress. Summative assessments sample from the domain that has been studied, selecting elements that represent the wider knowledge that has been taught.

Summative assessment is designed to produce a grade/outcome that can be used to make inferences about how much the pupils knows and understands. By using summative assessments across time, the amount of progress a pupil is making can be identified.

### **7.2 WHY IS SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT USED?**

Summative assessment is used to sample the work completed over a year to derive a shared meaning from it – an age-related grade.

Our approach means that pupils should understand everything that has been taught as part of a coherent and cumulative sequence. The purpose of summative assessment is to check what has been retained and therefore learnt.

Summative assessments are cumulative – they sample from the knowledge that has been taught across the year, with reference to work that has been completed in previous years. Ark Charter Academy always aims to work with the largest sample size possible, therefore utilising Ark Common Assessments where possible. We do not use GCSE papers at Key Stage Three, but will do so at Key Stage Four. GCSE papers are designed to sample from the domain being studied at GCSE, and are therefore not appropriate for use at Key Stage Three (when the pupils haven't been directly taught this content).

### **7.3 WHEN IS SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT USED?**

For Key Stage Three (Years 7-9) summative assessment is used at the end of each year in each subject studied as part of the End of Year Assessment. This occurs in Summer 2 so that the work completed across the academic year can be sampled. The pupils have developed their mental models over the year. Reference can be made to knowledge from previous years. Where possible, Charter aligns with the shared assessments used across the Ark Network. This allows data to be collected from different schools and facilitates the setting of more accurate grade boundaries.

For Year 10, summative assessment is used at the end of the academic year. This is an important part of the pupils' preparation for GCSE – the pupils have experience of completing GCSE papers in exam conditions. It also allows teachers to make inferences about how far the pupils know and understand the curriculum.

For Year 11, two different summative assessments are used. There is a paper 1 Mock held during Autumn 2, using past GCSE papers. This is whilst the course is almost completed, allowing inferences to be made about how far the pupils know and understand the curriculum. A grade is awarded, based on standardisation across the Ark Network.

Finally, pupils complete a Year 11 mock exam in Spring 1. Almost all courses will have completed teaching. This allows an inference to be made about how far the pupils know and understand the curriculum. The results are standardised and moderated across the Ark Network. It also allows teachers to finalise their plans for the period of revision up until the GCSEs begin.

The GCSE exams themselves take place during May and June, along with the standardisation of coursework materials.

### **7.4 HOW IS RECORDED?**

End of Year Assessments are the only assessments that are given a grade. This grade is an age-related grade. This means that this is the grade that a pupil producing that work in that particular year would be most likely to receive at the end of Year 11. The grades awarded range from 1 (the lowest) to 9 (the highest). For example, a pupil receiving a grade 5 in French in Year 8 is producing work of a quality that indicates they would receive a grade 5 at the end of Year 11 in their final GCSE examinations.

These grades can be compared to the target that pupils have, which has been set based on their Key Stage Two results or benchmarking that took place when they arrived at Charter (\*Baseline assessments first used in entirety in September 2020\*). Pupils who joined in Year 7 or have Key Stage Two data are expected to make more than nationally expected progress – so they are expected to make 1 grade more progress over the 5 years they are at Charter. Pupils with a base grade of 2 or below are expected to make more than 1 grade of additional progress.

The grades awarded can also be compared over years, allowing inferences about progress to be made.

End of Year Assessment data is shared with the Ark Network, allowing network-wide inferences to be made.

## 8 REFERENCES

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