



ASSESSMENT POLICY

MAY 2020

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> 1. Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to provide a comprehensive document to share with staff, other professionals, families and other interested stakeholders. The policy incorporates the vision, values and aims for assessment when using an adapted curriculum and the very specialised approaches required for teaching the children at Merrywood and having a heavy focus on trauma informed therapeutic approach.

Merrywood House has a broad and balanced approach that identifies and meets the variety of needs of our children. The curriculum provides consistency throughout the school, whilst recognising developmental and age-related aspects to learning. Therefore, we have assessment systems which accurately and meaningfully allow us to support the progress of our children.

The policy document starts with describing the context, vision, values and aims. This underpins the fundamental need for new and adapted assessment methods to meet the needs of the children at Merrywood House. It then describes the different forms of assessment that we use at different age milestones and for different subjects.

> 2. Context

Merrywood House is an independent special school for children aged from 7 to 11. At Merrywood House we support children with social, emotional and mental health needs, Autism (ASD) and children with Complex Needs.

Many children will come from a number of local authorities, our children have a diverse mix of nationalities and languages. Due to the complex nature of the children that attend Merrywood House, we offer a tailored approach to our curriculum; including academic learning, Play, therapy, life skills and Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education.

Therefore, our assessment systems support measuring the progress of children within a home like environment that is stable, secure by using trauma informed practice, formative assessment and summative assessment within the normal classroom activities where possible to enhance children's ability to engage in learning and self-development.

We believe that Merrywood House is a safe, secure and equal, stimulating school that supports children's individual needs. The staff and the school community work hard to ensure that a nurturing approach supports all children through their education, providing a bespoke approach to each child depending on their current needs.

At Merrywood House all aspects of school life are designed to create a sense of stability, inspire and engage children back into learning. We do this by using a curriculum based on skills, practical activities, problem solving and investigations, enhanced by creative approaches and essential life skills. The roles of communication, therapy, reflective practice, motivation and engagement are key to all we do and underpin our approach to learning.

Our assessment systems are therefore designed as a meaningful and reflective approach to support teachers in planning the best route for each individual. We want assessment at Merrywood to be used as a supportive measure that allows all progress, no matter how small, to be demonstrated and for each child to keep moving forward in their learning, however that may look.

When designing a curriculum that took account of all aspects of a child's life experiences, the assessment of such learning requires a bespoke approach. We encourage the wider exploration of subjects which results in higher attainment and greater enjoyment. Similarly, the freedom to choose their own approaches to assessment is consistent with the freedom many schools have to develop and deliver their own curriculum and allows schools to ensure their curriculum and approach to assessment are aligned."

For the children at Merrywood House, the assessment systems provide the opportunity for children demonstrate depth of knowledge and understanding, as Ofsted 2015 states “As part of child’s progress, inspectors will consider the growth in children’s security, breadth and depth of knowledge, understanding and skills.” This is especially important where children are studying life skills or targets that fall outside of traditional areas. At Merrywood House assessment aims to:

- Provide a baseline against which to measure attainment and progress in all areas, including the life skills and flexible curriculum.
- Identify the learning needs of an individual child or a group of children.
- Inform planning, target setting and interventions.
- Assist with the development of quality teaching strategies which motivate children.
- Be accurate, reliable and consistent across the school using a range of evidence and strategies.
- Complies with statutory requirements.
- Gather and capture additional information necessary to provide a tailored education, of high quality to all children
- Inform parents and carers of their child’s experiences and achievements.
- Support the identification of barriers to learning and the development of strategies to overcome these.

> 3. Assessment

3.1 Assessment, Recording and Reporting

The school has a team approach teacher, teaching assistants, therapists, and other professionals are all involved in monitoring pupil progress using individual education and behaviour plans. New Children have baseline assessments supported by previous assessment information to help to create an accurate baseline.

3.2 IEPs

Ongoing formative assessment is used to guide the progress of individual pupils through each lesson by identifying what each child has learned, supporting them to correct and improve and identifying the next stage in their learning. Half termly teacher assessments are made in Reading, Writing, Maths and Science in order to establish the level of attainment and to inform future planning. Assessments are made at the end of each topic in the other subjects. Work is carefully differentiated in order to meet the individual needs of children and regular assessment ensures continuity and progression. Each child/ young person has individually tailored positive expectations for achievement. This ensures they are challenged appropriately and experience success frequently. Individual behaviour targets are discussed with the child/young person on a daily basis and are monitored, reviewed and revised regularly.

All pupils have Annual Reviews where a detailed report is produced assessing attitude, attainment and progress.

Assessments are based on 'Pupil Can' statements. We use a four-point scale to assess children against age related expectations as they progress through the school:

B – Beginning to meet Age related expectations

W – Working towards Age related expectations

S – Secure in meeting Age rated expectations

E – Exceeding Age-related expectations

Teacher judgements are based on a number of sources including:

- Individual questioning, answers and discussions
- feedback through checking of written work and marking
- group discussions
- observations
- short rests and quizzes
- specific assignments for individual pupils;
- self and peer assessment

We use these strategies to enhance a child's progress through effective assessment

- Effective planning that takes into consideration the whole child.
- Focuses on how children learn best.
- Uses a trauma informed approach to frustrations in the classroom and help children to access learning.
- Recognises all learning achievements.
- Develops the capacity for a child to self-assess and set targets.
- Brings a flexible curriculum into child's schooling day (academically, socially, emotionally and so on) – Merrywood uses language specific to topics in reference to life skills, emotional intelligence, self-awareness to offer repetition and understanding.
- Fosters motivation.
- Eliminates the fear of failing and promotes the ethos that failure is simply a learning tool.

3.3 Target Setting

We set targets for each individual child, depending on their needs and EHCP recommendations. These based on formative, summative and regular teacher assessments, teachers set individual targets for IEPs. These are normally 3 or 4 in number and will include those for both behavioural & social and curriculum subjects (normally Maths and English).

All children should be involved in the planning, assessment and evaluation of their own learning, at their own operational level. They will be given structured opportunities to develop the skills necessary to engage in the target setting process. Suitable support materials and use of a variety of media, in addition to sensitive and constructive use of advocacy will allow children to record their own assessments. Targets are detailed, specific and time related. Other short-term simple targets may be set by teachers, but it is important that the child does not become confused or overwhelmed. Targets should be shared with the child and parents to encourage partnerships in learning. Targets should provide a dynamic framework for children to make rapid progress with focused and intensive support.

1. Where has the child come from?
2. Where are they now?
3. What are the next learning steps?
4. How do we get them to step out of their comfort zones?

3.4. Assessment of Learning

Formal summative assessments are carried out at the end of KS2 using SATs and teacher assessments. Standardised tests and reading tests are used to assess children on entry and at the end of each academic year. Children are assessed against P standards where appropriate (Working below KS1 expectations)

All results from assessments are analysed and used to inform future planning. (See Assessment Policy)

3.5 Recording

Records of progress kept for each child are updated continually using IEPs and supplementary information. Records will form the basis of written reports to parents at the end of each academic year. Records are retained throughout the child's time at the school and appropriate records passed on to other schools when pupils leave

3.6 Reporting

Written reports are provided for parents at the end of each academic year. Parents are invited to attend their child's annual review as part of their EHCP once a year and this meeting can be extended and used to discuss their child's overall progress at the school. Interim reviews are held once a term or when necessary. As classes are small, teachers are in regular contact with parents during the year and updates can be given and plans adjusted during these times.

> 4. Assessment and Reporting of Behaviour, Social, Emotional and Personal Development

We assess the following aspects of our children at Merrywood:

- Their emotional wellbeing
- Choices are children take
- Trauma symptoms
- Interactions with others

These targets are assessed 3 times per year and are monitored and evaluated using CPOMS, Boxal, Motional and Staff observations.

Teachers assess a children baseline for a given target at the beginning of a time frame.

This is then assessed within the set time scale and data is marked down on the individual child's assessment log.

> 5. Moderation

Children's work is moderated internally and externally in partnership with other Special Schools. This happens a number of times per year and gives teachers a chance to ensure their judgements are accurate and respond to feedback. Moderation training is provided.

> 6. Feedback and marking

Feedback is an essential part of the learning process for children including teaching self- evaluation skills.

All children are made aware of the expected learning objectives in each lesson and feedback during the lesson and at the end takes the form in a celebratory form that focuses on the new learning i.e. dojo.

Children are asked on their feedback when they participate in social activities, our main goal is to enable children to feel academically and socially able to interact in mainstream society.

> 7. Assessment of other areas

At Merrywood House, we value the progress made by children in all areas of their lives. These may not be directly linked to the curriculum or seen as traditional in nature; however, we have mechanisms to capture this progress and measure the outcomes of any intervention. Some of these include; Area Assessment / progress and further information on

Behaviour

- Reduction in behaviour frequency.
- Reduction in severity of behaviour.
- Reduction in physical interventions.
- Change in type of behaviour interventions.
- Behaviour policy
- Mid and end year behaviour reports

Attendance

- Increase in attendance.
- Attendance policy
- Mid and end year attendance reports

Specific interventions

- Measured using the p- levels.
- Support to achieve other targets.
- Interventions profile
- Individual pupil records and case studies.

Therapy

- Measured using the Merrywood House Assessment Tool and summative statements.
- Individualised targets set by therapist.
- Engagement with learning
- Interventions profile
- Pupil case notes.

Speech and Language therapy

- SALT reports and assessments
- Interventions profile
- Curriculum areas termly reports.

> 8. Home School Links

Child progress is reported through formal and informal ways. Informally we use:

- Home/school diaries
- Talking to parents in school/on phone

By liaising with multi professional team

Formally we use:

- National curriculum assessments linked to age related expectations
- Child's P-levels/P Standards
- EHCP's including IEPs and individual learning plans
- End of year curriculum reports
- Parents evenings/consultations

At Merrywood House we report on a wide range of sub groups of children. These include:

- Cohorts – Behavioural, social and emotional, ASD, Autism
- Age ranges – from 7 to 11, across Key stage 1 & 2
- Gender
- Pupil Premium status
- English as an additional language
- Black and minority ethnic groups
- Looked after children
- Vulnerabilities

The EHCP and the annual review are the most important and formal opportunity for the school to report to parents, however we provide opportunities throughout the year for parents to meet with teachers about their child's progress.

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