

Reflections Small School – Pupil Assessment Procedures

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1. The purpose of assessment at Reflections Small School

We define assessment as:

‘The process by which, in their daily practice, educators observe children’s learning, try to understand it, and then put their understanding to good use.’
(Drummond, M.J. (2010) *International Encyclopaedia of Education* vol. 3, pp316-322 Oxford: Elsevier.)

Assessment in Reflections Small School exists to benefit children and to allow educators to reflect on and strengthen their abilities to meet the enquiring and expressive children in front of them. This means that assessment is ongoing and sits at the heart of our reflective educational practice.

2.1 In Reflections Small School we assess children’s learning as a constantly developing range of powers within 4 key learning dispositions:

1. The desire to know and find out
3. The desire to invent, imagine and question
2. The desire to communicate and form relationships
4. The desire to remember and connect learning

Although all educators are familiar with the National Curriculum assessment practices and criteria, other than for the EYFS Profile we do not measure children’s development against external levels and standards. As in all other aspects of our school, assessment begins rather with our image of the child as:

- rich in potential, strong, powerful, competent
- confident in building relationships, having values and respect for others
- curious and open-minded to ideas and explorations of many kinds
- capable of independent, critical, creative and divergent thinking

Our assessment practice focuses on these qualities, relationships and ways of learning. It enables us to determine how each child is working with ideas, materials, knowledge and techniques; how well we are supporting the

development of each child's potential; the depth and range of children's interests over time; the group's social dynamics and connections in their class and in the wider community.

2.2 The 4 key learning dispositions and their descriptors

By learning dispositions we mean the characteristics and desires that dispose children to want to learn, be able and enthusiastic to learn, and to build their powers of learning over time.

We are inspired in this respect not only by the practice and philosophy of education in Reggio Emilia (see *Curriculum Policy*), but by New Zealand educators Margaret Carr and her colleagues (Carr, M. (2001) *Assessment in Early Childhood Settings: Learning Stories*. London: Paul Chapman).

At Reflections Small School we observe children's learning through the medium of project work and so our areas of assessment are grouped according to individual and collaborative aspects of project development. We look for and track the child's growing abilities in each of the 4 learning dispositions, through a series of descriptors:

i. The desire to know and find out

- initiates new ideas
- develops initial ideas into longer enquiries
- uses research skills – investigates, references, compares
- generates detailed questions, theories and hypotheses
- develops ways of testing, evaluating and refining knowledge
- persists with difficult techniques and experiences

ii. The desire to communicate and form relationships

- expresses ideas and experiences verbally and on paper
- finds ways to explain, demonstrate, clarify ideas to others
- listens with interest to other children and adults

- builds authentic and respectful relationships with other children, educators and the wider community
- recognises and accommodates different ways of thinking
- recognises and communicates his/her own emotions and those of others

iii. The desire to invent, imagine and question

- explores and masters skills in a wide range of creative languages
- uses analogies, metaphors, and similes to develop thinking and understanding
- tests received knowledge, conventional ideas and assumptions
- builds projects in imaginative and fantastical ways
- responds to other children's inventions and imaginative work

iv. The desire to remember and connect learning

- develops connections between ideas, thoughts and knowledge
- reviews previous learning to develop new projects
- connects learning across spaces (e.g. Small School, beach, forest)
- explores historical relationships in time, locally and globally
- connects learning and ideas in the past, present and future
- makes connections between their own learning and wider cultural precedents

I – the child uses this power occasionally or is learning how to use it

II – this power is a core way in which the child builds their learning

III – the child uses this power preferentially and with skill

The code is not a graded assessment – ie. we are not expecting each child to move progressively from I to III for all Powers. It is however a weighted assessment which allows us to record and work with a child's natural inclination, character and learning preferences and to establish where support is then needed to ensure breadth of learning.

3. Social dynamics

Collaborative learning sits at the heart of our educational practice and each child plays multiple roles within projects. Social dynamics – the way the group works together - are recorded regularly in observations which track how ideas develop through each child's agency and how thinking and discovery are passed from one child to another.

These detailed observations are used to compose a termly report for each child outlining their social and emotional involvement in the life of Small School. We also draw on them to outline next developments for each child and review these termly.

4. Assessment and Communication with Parents

There are three channels of communication about assessment for Year 1 and Year 2 children. For Reception children a fourth (Tapestry) is added to record observations that form part of the EYFS profile assessment.

1. Transparent Classroom
2. Parent consultations
3. Reports
4. Tapestry

Transparent Classroom:

This system records observations and assessments in the academic core of Small School through Montessori literacy and numeracy work. There is a facility for two-way communication for some or all of the entries. We also use Transparent Classroom to collect observations relating to our 4 dispositions, which in turn feed into parent consultations and written reports.

Parent Consultations:

Formal parents' evenings are held twice a year to discuss individual children's development and progress, their learning observations, and for parents to explore the classrooms/learning environments which are rich in evidence of children's thinking, exploration and finished work.

Reports:

A summary report is written for each child twice a year. This report synthesises observations from all days and spaces in Small School, including the beach and

forest. There are two parts to the report. The first is structured around our Dispositions of Learning and their descriptors, the second summarises progress in Literacy and Numeracy, including work with the Montessori materials.

Tapestry:

For Reception children only, this is a two-way online system. We use it to record observations of individual and group involvement in project work and in the life of Small School and we draw from these observations to compile the EYFS profile for each child in Year R. Family members can use Tapestry to add observations from home and the child's wider social life and these are also included in EYFS profile assessment decisions.

Additional:

In addition to these 4 channels of communication, parents have **day-to-day** contact with Small School staff, when they drop off and collect their children and can ask for time to discuss specific questions to do with a child's learning and development.

We also make an ongoing and open invitation to all parents to attend Reflections **Professional Development Days** during which we present children's project work as part of an exploration of practice and pedagogy, to national and international delegates.

Many of our projects are documented in the form of **printed publications and films**. These are given free of charge to the parents of children involved and allow them to see in detail how their child's work has developed over time and how each child has contributed to the social and collaborative dynamic of Small School learning.