Assessment Policy

Ethos Statement

TAO Independent School believes that assessments should celebrate progress, inform planning, and support the holistic development of every pupil. In our trauma-informed, outdoor-based setting, we use a flexible, responsive, and relational approach to assessment, recognising that progress is not always linear and that emotional readiness must come before academic success.

Purpose

Assessment at TAO is embedded within a therapeutic, outdoor-based curriculum. Our model integrates academic learning with social, emotional, and physical development through experiential education. Assessment therefore includes both academic and therapeutic metrics, ensuring a holistic picture of each pupil's growth.

Assessment informs curriculum sequencing and the daily adaptation of outdoor learning sessions. Teachers and relevant staff review progress information regularly and use it to adapt provision according to pupil need, curriculum progress and identified barriers to learning.

Assessments help staff:

- To understand the starting points and learning profiles of each pupil.
- To track academic, emotional, and social progress.
- To inform planning, differentiation, and interventions.
- To celebrate achievements and build self-esteem.
- To report progress meaningfully to families, professionals, and pupils.
- To ensure accountability and promote high expectations.

Progress is tracked against stage-based curriculum progression rather than age-related expectations, ensuring assessment reflects mastery, readiness and individual starting points.

Principles

- Assessment is for learning.
- Pupil voice and reflection are central to the process.
- Progress is personalised, considering EHCP outcomes, therapeutic goals, and academic growth.

- Feedback is relational, specific, and strengths-based.
- Assessment at TAO Independent School is directly aligned to each subject's Scheme of Work and progression matrix. Teachers assess pupils against the specific knowledge, skills and developmental indicators outlined within each subject SOW. This ensures assessment is purposeful, consistent, and clearly linked to curriculum intent rather than age-related expectations.

Types of Assessment Used

a) Baseline Assessments

BBaseline assessments are completed during the initial assessment period following admission, normally within the first six weeks, with subsequent diagnostic or question-level analysis used where appropriate. This ensures a balanced understanding of each pupil's academic, social, and emotional starting point**.**

Completed within the first 6 weeks of placement and include:

- Reading, writing, and maths diagnostic tools diagnostics such as GL or equivalent assessment tools.
- TAO's wider baselining toolkit and, where appropriate, recognised social, emotional or wellbeing assessment tools.
- Phonics reading age.
- Sensory and regulation profiles.
- EHCP outcomes review (if applicable).

b) Formative Assessment

Ongoing, low-pressure assessment through:

- Observations in learning and outdoor tasks.
- Staff reflections and key worker notes.
- Where assessment indicates that a pupil is not yet secure, targeted intervention is planned. This may include additional scaffolding, adapted delivery, therapeutic support, increased repetition or reduced demand. Progress is reviewed regularly and interventions adjusted as required.
- Assessment also takes place during outdoor and therapeutic activities, with staff monitoring regulation, participation, resilience, teamwork and application of learning in real-world contexts.
- Pupil self-assessment and journals.
- Photo and video evidence of practical learning.
- Mindfulness and regulation check-ins.

c) Summative Assessment

- Reviewed through Learning Journey reviews according to the School's assessment and review cycle
- EHCP annual reviews.
- Progress reports to parents/carers and commissioning bodies.
- Functional assessments for life skills and independence.
- End of unit tests.

Pupil Progress Reviews

- Progress reviews take place at appropriate points within the School's assessment cycle, involving pupils, families and relevant professionals according to need..
- Learning Journeys and individual targets are updated to reflect current strengths, progress and next steps.
- Use of visual tools to share progress with pupils.
- Includes academic, social, emotional, and regulation targets.
- The Assessment Policy is reviewed annually by the Assessment Lead and/or co-coordinators and Headteacher. Assessment information is reviewed periodically to identify patterns, gaps, progress and priorities for curriculum development, intervention and professional development.

Recording and Reporting

Any assessment data shared externally follows GDPR requirements and is authorised by the Headteacher or DSL where it relates to pupil wellbeing.

- Records kept securely on OneDrive.
- Each pupil has a live working file accessible by relevant professionals.
- Reports are shared in accessible language and formats.
- Assessment informs curriculum planning, therapeutic intervention, and transition planning.

Staff Training

Staff receive assessment information, guidance or training appropriate to their role, responsibilities and the assessment tools they are expected to use. This may include::

- Assessment for learning.
- Use of standardised tests and QLA.

- Observational and relational assessment methods.
- Understanding EHCPs and linking to daily provision.
- Using relevant social, emotional or wellbeing assessment tools where these form part of an individual pupil's assessment arrangements..

Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Headteacher	has operational responsibility for the quality and effectiveness of assessment arrangements
Proprietor	provides strategic oversight and assurance.
SENCO / Assessment Lead	oversees baseline assessment, Learning Journey review and moderation arrangements and supports alignment between EHCP outcomes, assessment and classroom provision.
Teachers / Instructors	record formative assessment, contribute to Learning Journeys and individual targets, and engage pupils in reflective dialogue about progress.
Key Workers	Maintain relational assessment logs and contribute to therapeutic progress notes.

This policy reflects TAO's trauma-informed and outdoor-based educational model, which balances academic progress with emotional regulation and wellbeing, recognising that readiness and relationships underpin all meaningful learning.

Legal Framework & Review

This policy has been developed with reference to the following legislation and guidance:

- Data Protection Act 2018 / UK GDPR
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (as amended) – Part 1
- Equality Act 2010
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- Ofsted Education Inspection Framework and Non-association Independent School Inspection Toolkit, current versions
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (2015), where relevant

Version Updates

Version	Date	Author	Review / Changes	Approved By
2.0	09/09/26	Daniel Giblin	09/09/27	Headteacher / Proprietor

TAO

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL

FIND YOUR JOURNEY . EXPLORE IT TOGETHER