

# HA on assessment (Summer 2014 - TL)

## Introduction



Whilst a number of schools have had well-considered assessment procedures for primary history, these represented a minority. With the new national curriculum, the old level descriptions have been replaced by a single sentence attainment target which states that "by the end of each key stage, pupils are expected to know, apply and understand the matters, skills and processes specified in the relevant programme of study".

It is important to remember that assessment is not a single entity but has several interlinked components including:

- planning for assessment;
- understanding progression in history including why some work can be judged better than others and how the quality of questions and tasks can affect assessment;
- managing the assessment process within the classroom and school;
- recording and evaluating the assessment information to enable teachers to judge attainment, progress and what needs to be done to improve performance;
- reporting progress.

Schools will be in varying states of preparedness for assessing pupil progress in history. This advice is not to try to insist on a single model for assessment but to offer some broad guidelines which should be applicable whatever the context of the school and its policies. It covers:

- A) Key principles for assessment in primary history;
- B) How these principles might be achieved;
- C) Holistic features of progression;

D) How the Historical Association can support schools in primary history assessment.

## A. Key Principles



The following represent some key principles for assessment in primary history.

1. Any system needs to be manageable - too much information can render the system unusable and overwhelming;
2. Ensure that any system conforms to school requirements helping ensure that history assessment fits into a valid whole-school assessment strategy;
3. Encourage teachers to share examples of good history questions and tasks that elicit historical thinking and help pupils do justice to their ability;
4. All staff involved in the assessment of history should build up some familiarity with the features of progression in history and be able to articulate why some pupils' work is better than others. This involves going beyond content acquisition and general educational criteria such as literacy skills to cover some of the key concepts and processes of history. Don't get too bogged down in the minutiae. Whilst teachers might gradually acquire greater familiarity in measuring progression in concepts such as change, cause, enquiry and interpretation etc, it is probably more important that they understood the "big features" of progression in primary history (see below);
5. Some assessment opportunities should be considered as part of the planning process such as the type and frequency of assessment opportunities;
6. Assessment involves marking individual pieces of work focused on valid objectives and criteria as well as gaining a longer term view over a period of time
7. Use a variety of approaches - formal and informal to assess pupils such as observing pupils in everyday situations or in contexts such as school visits, listening to pupils talk, questioning pupils, pupils self and peer assessment, marking pupils work;
8. Devise a clear, manageable recording system that allows teachers to see at a glance performance and guides them towards future teaching approaches. Avoid creating a new set of levels. Have a separate approach to marking individual pieces of work to "best fit" monitoring of work over a period of time. Ideally the system should enable

- users to see quickly how individual pupils, groups and the whole school are performing against the key elements of the subject;
9. Set aside time to analyse and use any assessment information both in terms of individual performance as well as class and group issues such as aspects, concepts etc they find especially easy or challenging and use this information to influence future plans;
  10. Ideally build in some occasions when pupil views and understanding about their progress and attitudes can be gathered;
  11. Gather some practical evidence of standards to help teachers measure standards and progress such as examples of work achieved in different contexts perhaps showing high, average and lower-quality work;
  12. Do not compartmentalise assessment and recording across individual years or key stages. Pupils in many classes are likely to show a wide range of historical competence which cuts across key stages. This does not mean that a school might not want to devise some end of key stage expectations but the recording system should be transferable across years and key stages.

## **B. Achieving these principles**



### **How these principles might be achieved.**

1. Understand the school policy on assessment and ways in which history attainment and achievement might be effectively used within this structure. Ensure senior managers and governors are aware of some of the features and aims of primary history assessment;
2. Build assessment opportunities into long, medium, and short term plans including plenty of scope for revisiting so that there can be reassurance that something has been embedded;
3. Familiarise staff teaching history with the main features of the national curriculum for the subject;

4. Attend inset or use staff meetings to share understanding of the curriculum and discuss and agree standards of work, eg. sharing and discussing common assessment tasks;
5. Build a bank of good questions and tasks that can be used across the school which are both challenging, varied and allow meaningful assessment;
6. Build in opportunities for feedback and discussion with pupils about their progress and goals for improvement;
7. Produce a school portfolio of work with specific examples of pupils' work in a range of contexts - formal and informal with some annotation which can be replaced over time with better examples if appropriate;
8. Devise a simple recording system that is agreed and used by the school;
9. Provide examples of "model" meaningful reports;
10. Access guidance and training from the Historical Association and other respectable providers.

### **C. Holistic Features of Progression.**



#### **Holistic Features of Progression.**

1. A greater database of knowledge about events, situations and people covering local, British and world history;
2. Greater confidence in comparing, contrasting and linking history across different timespans, geographical areas and perspectives;
3. The ability to engage in historical enquiries showing greater independence in posing questions, selecting and deploying evidence and communicating findings;
4. More awareness of the uncertainty of history and ways in which it has been represented and interpreted;
5. Greater understanding and proficiency at using the key organising concepts of history such as change, cause, similarity and significance as well as historical terminology.

### **D. HA Support**

## **How the Historical Association can support schools in primary history assessment.**

1. Exemplar pupil work showing progression and commentary; (Coming in 2015)
2. [Schemes of work](#) showing assessment criteria;
3. Guidance on the website including blogs and frequently-asked questions such as how to put together a portfolio;
4. Articles in the HA's journal "[Primary History](#)";
5. [Workshops and sessions](#) at conferences and history forums;
6. Support through the [HA Quality Mark process](#).