Assessment at Westfield Community School, Wigan, is at the heart of all teaching and learning. It is an ongoing process. Its main purpose is to gauge learning and to help plan the next steps, ensuring that the teaching is appropriate and that the learners make good progress. We believe that ensuring assessment is valid and reliable is the key to success. The impact of accurate assessment can have a far-reaching impact, often beyond academic development. It enables our teachers to understand the progress our pupils are making within the context of a well-planned and sequenced curriculum.

Our assessment principles act as a guide and are applied to all year groups, key stages and across different subject areas. Passing robust information generated by assessments from teacher to teacher ensures that each child’s progress and future learning needs are understood. Through careful monitoring, we make sure that our approach to assessment remains manageable for all members of staff and meaningful for all children and their parents and carers. In short it is efficient and effective.

Despite the centrality of assessment in the teaching and learning process and in our system of qualifications and accountability, the development of understanding and expertise in educational assessment is too often overlooked. This is not the case at Westfield. We see the beneficial impact of high-quality educational assessment on our pupils’ learning on a daily basis so developing expertise across our teaching staff has become a high priority.

In order to achieve the level of expertise we expect of our teachers, we have invested in high quality CPD provided by the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors (CIEA) The Deputy Headteacher is an accredited CIEA Chartered Educational Assessor who oversees assessment throughout the school, supported by an assessment coordinator who has recently completed the **Lead Assessor Support Programme**. Both members of the team support staff through a variety of activities. We have a suite of tools that we use to cross-reference where pupils are up to in their learning. This is a blended approach in which internal formative teacher assessment judgements are complemented by the use of external standardised assessments.

As headteacher I have been delighted with the impact of our investment in such high quality CPD. Leaders and teachers at all levels understand the purpose and use of assessment and this is evidenced through the quality of discourse amongst staff. It is only when teachers have a deep understanding of assessment that effective practice can be developed.

We are highly conscious of reducing teacher workload and through ongoing dialogue and discussion we increasingly focus on things that matter and make a difference to pupil progress.

From my experience in this area, opportunities to engage with high quality training have been very limited. This course provides the opportunity for colleagues in school to engage with high quality assessment which we believe is at the core of every successful school.

The benefits of engaging with this programme are significant and make a clear and obvious impact on the school as a whole. Examples of the benefits include the fact that subject leaders now ensure that triangulation of evidence informs teacher judgements. Where a disparity exists, subject leaders challenge colleagues to justify their evidence base in a supportive way and an agreement is reached. These informed and professional conversations are, in my opinion, high quality assessment in action. Also, by supporting highly trained staff through this programme we are able to quality assure assessment information we provide for scrutiny by different stakeholders. Governors, for example, can be reassured that information presented to them is robust and accurate.

With the introduction of the new Reception Baseline Assessment and the end to Key Stage One statutory assessments, it will be more important than ever that between Y1 to Y6 teachers and schools are able to assess pupils in a valid and reliable way to ensure they make the necessary progress.

Finally, given the impact of the pandemic, knowing where pupils are in their learning has never been more important.

I recommend this programme to colleagues.

Tim Sherriff

Headteacher Westfield Community School, Wigan.

Co-opted member of the NAHT’s Assessment and Accountability Group

Vice-chair CIEA