

HIDELOW GRANGE SCHOOL



Pupil Assessment Policy and Framework 2025 – 2026

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Operated under CareTech Community Services Ltd / Branas Isaf Group

1. School Context and Ethos

Hidelow Grange School (HGS) is an independent specialist day school located in Acton Beauchamp, Herefordshire. The school is operated by CareTech Community Services Ltd as part of the Branas Isaf group and is registered for pupils aged 11 to 18 with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, including those who present with harmful sexualised behaviours (HSB). HGS holds Good with Outstanding Features from Ofsted (November 2024).

Our pupils are predominantly Looked After Children placed by local authorities across England and Wales. Most have experienced significant disruption to their education and personal histories. Many carry the effects of trauma, loss and attachment difficulties that directly shape how they engage with learning. Assessment at HGS is designed with this context at the centre. It is not something done to pupils; it is a tool for understanding and supporting each individual.

Our curriculum is built on the principle of low threat, high challenge (Mary Myatt) and is informed by the Good Lives Model, which emphasises human agency and strength-based planning. Assessment must therefore be experienced by pupils as purposeful, honest and connected to their own progress, rather than as an exercise in comparison or judgement.

2. Purpose of This Policy

This policy establishes the expectations, procedures and standards for all assessment activity at HGS. It applies to all teaching staff, curriculum leads, the SENCO and the Headteacher, and is aligned with the requirements of the Education Inspection Framework (EIF) 2023 and the Independent School Standards Regulations.

Assessment at HGS serves three interconnected purposes:

- **Assessment for Learning:** ongoing formative practice that improves teaching and supports pupil progress.
- **Assessment of Learning:** summative judgements that measure attainment and inform accreditation decisions.
- **Assessment as Learning:** developing pupils' capacity to understand their own progress, set targets and take responsibility for their next steps.

3. Alignment with the HGS Curriculum

Assessment is integral to the HGS five-year curriculum plan (2025-2030) and is structured around two KS4 pathways:

- **Pathway A (GCSE):** for pupils working at or towards GCSE level, following a subject-based curriculum leading to GCSEs, Cambridge Nationals and Level 1/2 awards.
- **Pathway B (Foundation):** for pupils working below expected levels, following a thematic and applied curriculum leading to Functional Skills, Entry Level Certificates and AQA Unit Awards.
- **Nurture Pathway (Year 7):** for pupils working significantly below age-related expectations on entry, following an intensive, diagnostically led programme incorporating RWI Fresh Start, Literacy Tree, Numicon Big Ideas, Bedrock Learning and the GL Assessment suite.

Pathway placement is determined by baseline assessment data collected during the first six weeks of a pupil's time at HGS. It is reviewed at each IEP cycle and is not fixed: pupils may move between pathways as their needs and attainment develop. The decision to revise a pathway rests with the Headteacher, in discussion with the subject lead and SENCO.

Assessment informs the half-termly curriculum maps produced for each year group and subject. Teachers use assessment outcomes to sequence learning, identify gaps, plan targeted intervention and make accreditation decisions. The curriculum threads running through all pathways, including Literacy and Numeracy Spines, SMSC, British Values, Jigsaw PSHE, Careers (Gatsby Benchmarks 1-8) and the Good Lives Model, are assessed through both formal and informal means.

4. The HGS Assessment Cycle

The table below provides a whole-school overview of assessment activity from referral through to external accreditation.

When	What	Tool / Source	Purpose / Action
On referral	Pre-placement review	EHCP, PEP, previous reports, EP assessments	Build a provisional learning profile; inform transition planning
Weeks 1–2	Initial pupil interview	Structured discussion (tutor-led)	Understand educational history, triggers, strengths and preferred learning styles
Weeks 1–6	Baseline assessments	GL Assessment suite (reading, spelling, numeracy, dyslexia screening); BKSB; Boxall Profile; Motional; GCSE/ELC/Functional Skills diagnostic questions	Establish starting points; identify gaps; confirm KS4 pathway (A or B)
Week 16	Cognitive profiling	WISC-V (clinical psychologist, therapy team)	Full cognitive profile across 5 domains; inform differentiation and access arrangements
End of baseline	Initial Assessment Report	All baseline data collated on Pupil Progress Tracker	Shared with LA, Virtual School, care team and therapist; first IEP produced
Every lesson	Formative AfL	Teacher observation, questioning, live marking, RAG self-rating, Think-Pair-Share, exit tasks	Adjust teaching in real time; capture evidence of progress; identify misconceptions
Half-termly	Subject tracker update	Teacher assessment records; work scrutiny; IEP target review	Monitor progress towards KS4 targets; identify pupils requiring intervention or stretch
Termly	Summative review	End of unit/topic tests; GCSE-style tasks; Functional Skills practice papers; Boxall re-profile; Motional check-in	Measure attainment against targets; update IEP; report to stakeholders
Annually / as required	External examinations and accreditation	GCSE; Functional Skills L1/L2; Entry Level Certificates; AQA Unit Awards; John Muir; DofE; Arts Award; Cambridge Nationals	Secure nationally recognised qualifications matched to individual pathway

5. Baseline Assessment on Admission

5.1 Pre-Placement Information

Prior to a pupil's admission, the Headteacher requests relevant education documentation from the placing authority. This may include the EHCP, Personal Education Plan (PEP), previous school reports, EP

assessments, SEN information and access arrangements, risk assessments and samples of work. This information is used to begin building a provisional learning profile and to plan the pupil's initial timetable.

The quality and completeness of pre-placement information varies significantly. HGS does not allow incomplete documentation to delay a pupil's engagement with learning: the baseline process itself is designed to establish the information needed to plan effectively.

5.2 Initial Pupil Interview

Within the first week, the allocated tutor conducts a structured Initial Education Interview. This conversation explores the pupil's schooling history, their experience of learning, their subjects of interest and difficulty, and the triggers and strategies that have supported or undermined their engagement in the past. The interview is relational in intent: it is an opportunity for the pupil to feel heard before formal assessment begins.

5.3 Baseline Assessment Tools (Weeks 1-6)

All baseline assessments are incorporated into normal lesson time wherever possible, minimising the experience of formal testing. They are carried out across the following domains:

Literacy and Numeracy

- GL Assessment Reading and Spelling tests (standardised scores; reading age equivalents)
- GL Assessment Dyslexia Screening; followed by the Dyslexia Portfolio for pupils identified as at risk
- BKSB Literacy and Numeracy (diagnostic gap analysis for Functional Skills and GCSE)
- KS3 Progress Testing and ELC/GCSE diagnostic questions in English, Maths and Science
- Bedrock Learning vocabulary baseline (Nurture Pathway and wider cohort as appropriate)

Social, Emotional and Behavioural

- Boxall Profile: completed collaboratively by the teaching team following six weeks of shared observation. Identifies developmental needs and the quality of skills available to support learning. Informs IEP behavioural targets.
- Motional: evidence-based tools for measuring and reporting on emotional health and wellbeing. Completed by the teaching team. Informs IEP wellbeing targets and the school's whole-school wellbeing picture.

Cognitive Profiling

All pupils receive a WISC-V cognitive assessment administered by the clinical psychologist as part of the 16-week therapeutic assessment. The WISC-V produces a Full-Scale IQ where possible and five composite index scores: Verbal Comprehension, Visual Spatial, Fluid Reasoning, Working Memory and Processing Speed. Results are shared with the Headteacher and used to inform differentiation, access arrangements and learning pathway decisions.

5.4 Completion of the Baseline Period

At the end of the six-week baseline, all data is recorded on the Pupil Progress Tracker. The Headteacher, SENCO and relevant subject teachers review the combined picture and confirm the pupil's KS4 pathway. The school then produces an Initial Assessment Report, which is shared with the placing authority (Social Worker and Virtual School), the care team and the therapist. At this point, teachers produce the first Individual Education Plan (IEP) for each pupil.

6. Ongoing Assessment

6.1 Formative Assessment for Learning

Formative assessment is the daily practice of checking understanding, adjusting teaching and giving pupils feedback that moves them forward. At HGS, it happens during learning rather than after it. It is collaborative, personally referenced and focused on process.

Teachers integrate the following into every lesson:

- Learning objectives and success criteria are shared at the start of each lesson in accessible, pupil-facing language.
- Questioning is used purposefully to check understanding across the class, not just to confirm the responses of the most confident pupils. Cold calling, think-pair-share and no-hands-up strategies are used as appropriate.
- Exit tasks and end-of-lesson checks provide a brief, low-stakes snapshot of what pupils have retained.
- Live marking and verbal feedback during lessons allow teachers to respond to misconceptions in real time.
- RAG self-rating gives pupils ownership of their understanding and contributes to the formative picture.

6.2 Summative Assessment of Learning

Summative assessment happens after a period of learning and provides a measure of attainment at a given point. It is used to confirm progress, inform pathway decisions and build the evidence base for accreditation. Summative assessment tools include:

- End of unit and topic assessments in each subject
- Termly GCSE-style tasks in Pathway A subjects
- Functional Skills practice papers (Entry Level through Level 2) in Pathway B
- Internal examinations held in the summer term
- External examinations (GCSE, Functional Skills, Entry Level Certificates)
- AQA Unit Award submissions and portfolios
- Standardised re-testing in reading, spelling and numeracy (termly for the Nurture Pathway; annually for the wider cohort)

6.3 Subject Tracker and IEP Reviews

Teachers update their subject assessment trackers on a weekly basis. These records monitor individual pupil progress against IEP targets and curriculum pathway expectations. They are used to:

- Identify pupils making below expected progress and plan targeted intervention
- Identify pupils making strong progress and adjust their learning pathway or targets accordingly
- Inform half-termly and termly reporting
- Provide evidence for IEP reviews and EHCP annual reviews

IEP targets covering Literacy, Numeracy and Personal Development are reviewed and evaluated at the end of each half term. Targets that have been met are replaced with new, stretching targets. Targets not yet met are revised to ensure they remain achievable and meaningful.

7. Assessment for Learning: Classroom Strategies

The table below sets out the features of effective AfL practice and the strategies used by all teachers at HGS.

Features of Effective AfL

Teaching Strategies at HGS

Sharing learning objectives and success criteria	Share objectives and success criteria at lesson start in accessible language. Reference them during plenaries. Use them as the basis for questioning and formative feedback. Evaluate outcomes to inform next lesson planning.
Helping pupils know and recognise the standards they are aiming for	Show exemplar work that meets criteria. Provide clear success criteria linked to objectives. Model excellent responses (e.g. annotated writing on the board). Display work in progress and finished pieces. Ensure shared presentation expectations across all subjects.
Involving pupils in peer and self-assessment	Create structured opportunities for pupils to discuss what they have learned and found difficult. Encourage collaborative improvement ('How could this be better?'). Ask pupils to explain their reasoning. Build in reflection time. Identify next steps with pupils, not for them.
Providing feedback that leads to next steps	Value oral and written feedback equally. Ensure feedback is specific: what was done well, what needs improving, and how. Differentiate feedback to individual and group needs. Use RAG self-rating and the HGS marking framework to make feedback visible and actionable.
Promoting confidence that every pupil can improve	Identify and celebrate small steps. Use low-threat/high-challenge framing (Myatt). Build a secure classroom ethos in which mistakes are reframed as learning opportunities. Connect effort to progress explicitly in lesson dialogue.

8. Marking and Feedback Framework

Feedback is one of the most powerful levers available to teachers. At HGS, feedback is responsive, constructive and designed to close the gap between where a pupil is and where they need to be. It takes two principal forms: live verbal feedback during lessons, and written marking of completed work.

Good marking at HGS:

- Recognises what the pupil has done well (WWW: What Went Well)
- Identifies one clear and specific improvement target (EBI: Even Better If)
- Sets an action point that the pupil can act on immediately (AP: Action Point)
- Uses the Whole School Literacy Marking Code for consistency across all subjects
- Is completed promptly and provides pupils with the opportunity to respond

Pupils use purple pen to respond to marking. Teacher feedback is written in green. This two-colour dialogue is consistent across all classrooms and subject exercise books, and makes the teacher-pupil feedback loop visible.

Symbol / Notation	Meaning	Pupil Action Required
WWW	What Went Well — a specific strength in the work	Read and reflect; record in learning journal where applicable
EBI	Even Better If — a specific, actionable improvement	Respond to the target in writing or verbally
AP	Action Point — a discrete task to act on immediately	Complete the AP before moving on to new work
RAG: Green	Secure — pupil demonstrates confident,	Consider stretch task or peer explanation opportunity

	independent understanding	
RAG: Amber	Developing — pupil shows understanding with some support	Complete EBI response; teacher to check in next lesson
RAG: Red	Emerging — pupil requires further input or intervention	Teacher to plan targeted support; flag for IEP review if persistent
C	Capital letter needed or incorrectly used	Correct in purple pen at the point marked
P	Punctuation missing or incorrect	Correct in purple pen at the point marked
SP	Spelling error	Write the correct spelling three times beneath the work
GR	Grammar check needed	Rewrite the sentence correctly
//	New paragraph needed or unnecessary paragraph break	Restructure at the point marked
VF	Verbal feedback given during the lesson	No written action required; teacher to note discussion

9. Accreditation

Every pupil at HGS has the right to leave with a portfolio of accreditation that reflects what they know and can do. Because placement lengths are unpredictable, the school pursues accreditation opportunities actively from the point of pathway placement. The range of available qualifications ensures that every pupil can achieve meaningful, nationally recognised outcomes regardless of the length of their time at HGS.

Pathway	Available Accreditation
Pathway A (GCSE)	GCSE English Language, English Literature, Maths, Science (Combined/Separate), History, Geography and other subjects where appropriate. Cambridge Nationals. BTEC introductory units.
Pathway B (Foundation)	Functional Skills English and Maths (Entry Level 1-3, L1, L2). Entry Level Certificates (ELC). AQA Unit Awards across curriculum areas. BTEC introductory units.
Nurture Pathway (Year 7)	AQA Unit Awards. RWI Fresh Start progression milestones. Numicon Big Ideas staged assessments. Bedrock Learning vocabulary assessments.
Enrichment and Extended Curriculum	John Muir Award. Duke of Edinburgh Award (Bronze from Y8; Silver from Y10). Arts Award (Discover/Explore). ASDAN Short Courses. Jigsaw PSHE accreditation. Sports Leaders Award (where applicable).

All pupils develop a portfolio of accreditation that evidences both their academic and non-academic achievements. This portfolio accompanies them into their next steps in education, employment or training and provides placing authorities and care teams with clear evidence of progress.

10. Recording and Reporting

10.1 Recording

Each teacher maintains a subject tracker that is updated weekly. The Pupil Progress Tracker held by the SENCO and Headteacher aggregates subject-level data and provides a whole-school view of attainment and progress. Records are also maintained for IEP targets, Boxall and Motional scores, and external accreditation outcomes.

10.2 Reporting

HGS produces structured written reports at the following intervals:

- Half-termly progress summaries: a brief written update on each pupil's engagement, attainment and progress in each subject, alongside a behavioural/pastoral note.
- Termly full reports: a comprehensive report covering attainment, progress, behaviour, attendance and next steps across all curriculum areas.
- Annual Review contributions: HGS provides a written school report and attends the EHCP Annual Review, presenting evidence of progress against EHCP outcomes.

All reports are sent to:

- The placing Local Authority (via the allocated Social Worker and Virtual School)
- The Registered Manager of the young person's care home
- The Care Team responsible for the young person
- Parents and carers where this is appropriate and safe

11. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Assessment Responsibilities
Headteacher	Overall responsibility for assessment policy and its implementation. Reviews the policy annually. Monitors attainment data and progress through work scrutiny, learning walks and data review meetings. Signs off Initial Assessment Reports and pathway decisions. Line manages curriculum leadership.
Deputy Headteacher	Supports the Headteacher in monitoring teaching, learning and assessment quality. Leads lesson observation and work scrutiny cycles. Coordinates with subject leads on data analysis and intervention planning.
SENCO / Exams Officer	Manages access arrangements and examination entries. Maintains the SEND register and coordinates EHC annual review evidence. Ensures assessment data informs IEP targets. Liaises with external agencies (EP, therapy team) regarding cognitive profiling outcomes.
Subject / Curriculum Leads	Monitor planning and assessment within their area. Ensure progression and consistency across the school. Complete subject self-evaluation. Identify individual and group trends. Report in teaching and learning meetings.
Class Teachers	Carry out formative and summative assessment as part of everyday practice. Update subject trackers weekly. Mark work in line with the HGS Marking Framework. Produce IEP targets following baseline completion and review them termly. Contribute to half-termly and termly reports.
Therapy Team (Clinical Psychologist)	Administer the WISC-V as part of the 16-week therapeutic assessment. Share cognitive profiles with the Headteacher. Contribute to IEP review where relevant.

Director of Education

Strategic oversight and group-level quality assurance. Receives summary attainment data. Supports Ofsted readiness.

12. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The Headteacher holds overall responsibility for monitoring the implementation and impact of this policy. The following activities form the monitoring cycle:

- Half-termly work scrutiny and book looks by the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher
- Termly data review meetings at which the Pupil Progress Tracker is analysed for individual and cohort progress
- Regular learning walks focused on AfL and feedback quality in classrooms
- Annual review of the policy by the Headteacher
- Reporting to the Director of Education (Andrew Sutherland) as part of CareTech group quality assurance

This policy will be reviewed annually. The next scheduled review date is September 2026.

13. Links to Other Policies and Procedures

- Curriculum Policy
- Teaching and Learning Policy
- SEND Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Examinations Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Subject Development Plans
- Individual Education Plan Procedure

Appendix A: Assessment for Learning in Practice

The following guidance supports teachers in implementing effective AfL across all subjects and pathways at HGS. These strategies are grounded in the principle that every pupil at HGS can improve when learning is made visible, feedback is specific and the classroom environment is one of low threat and high expectation.

Sharing Learning Objectives and Success Criteria

Learning objectives describe what pupils will know or be able to do by the end of a lesson or sequence of learning. Success criteria describe what it looks like when that objective has been met. At HGS, both are written in language pupils can understand and engage with. Teachers avoid objectives that are too broad to be meaningful ('understand poems') in favour of specific, assessable outcomes ('identify and explain how a poet uses language to create a feeling of...'). Success criteria are shared verbally and displayed. They form the basis of the plenary and of verbal feedback during the lesson.

Questioning

Effective questioning at HGS is planned, not incidental. Teachers consider in advance which questions they will use to check for understanding, which pupils they will direct questions to, and how they will respond to unexpected answers. Strategies include: cold calling; think-pair-share; mini whiteboards for whole-class response; 'pose, pause, pounce, bounce'; Socratic questioning to extend thinking. The aim is always to gather genuine information about understanding, not to perform teaching.

Feedback and Response Time

Pupils at HGS need time to act on feedback. A lesson that moves on without allowing pupils to respond to marking or verbal comments misses the most powerful part of the feedback loop. Teachers build in dedicated response time, in which pupils read, reflect on and act on teacher comments in purple pen. This is particularly important for pupils who find sustained writing difficult: response tasks should be accessible and proportionate.

Self and Peer Assessment

Self and peer assessment builds metacognitive awareness, which is central to the Good Lives Model goal of self-determination. At HGS, peer assessment is introduced carefully, with clear protocols and success criteria, so that it is experienced as supportive rather than threatening. Pupils are taught to give specific, constructive feedback: not 'this is good' but 'this works well because you have used evidence from the text.' Self-assessment using RAG rating is used consistently across the school.

Appendix B: The HGS Whole School Marking and Literacy Code

The following code is used consistently in all subjects across the school. It is displayed in every classroom and explained to pupils on arrival. Consistency across subjects reinforces the code's meaning and reduces cognitive load for pupils who otherwise have to remember different systems in different rooms.

Written Feedback: The Three-Stage Approach

- Stage 1 (WWW): The teacher identifies one or more specific strengths in the piece of work. This is written in green pen and is specific ('You have accurately identified the structural technique and linked it to effect') rather than generic ('Good work').
- Stage 2 (EBI): The teacher identifies one clear, achievable improvement. This is written in green pen and is phrased as an invitation ('Even better if you added a second piece of evidence to support your point').

- Stage 3 (AP): Where appropriate, the teacher sets a specific action the pupil must complete before the next lesson or at the start of the next lesson. The AP symbol marks the location in the work where the action should be taken. Pupils respond in purple pen.

RAG Self-Rating

At the end of most lessons, pupils rate their understanding of the learning objective using a RAG scale. Green indicates secure understanding; amber indicates partial understanding; red indicates confusion or significant difficulty. This information is used by the teacher to plan the following lesson and to identify pupils who need additional support. RAG ratings are recorded in pupils' books and referenced in teacher tracker records.

The Literacy Marking Code

The literacy marking code is used in all subjects, not only in English. This reflects the school's commitment to developing literacy as a whole-school priority. The code is consistent, simple and pupil-facing. Teachers use it to draw pupils' attention to specific errors without over-correcting or undermining confidence. The expectation is that pupils correct errors in purple pen, spelling errors are written three times below the work, and the correction is checked at the start of the following lesson.

Appendix C: Alignment with the Education Inspection Framework

The table below maps the key features of this assessment policy to the relevant criteria of the Education Inspection Framework (EIF) 2023 and Ofsted's supplementary guidance for independent schools and alternative provision.

EIF Area / Criterion	Relevant Section of This Policy	How HGS Addresses This
Quality of Education: Curriculum intent	Sections 2, 3	Assessment policy is explicitly aligned to the 5-year curriculum plan and its two KS4 pathways. Pathway placement decisions are evidence-based and reviewed.
Quality of Education: Curriculum implementation	Sections 6, 7, 8	Formative AfL strategies, the marking framework and subject tracker update cycle ensure daily implementation of the curriculum is assessed and adjusted.
Quality of Education: Curriculum impact	Sections 4, 6, 9, 10	Termly summative review, accreditation portfolio and half-termly reporting provide layered evidence of pupil progress and attainment.
Personal Development: SEMH and therapeutic context	Sections 1, 5.3, 6	Boxall, Motional, WISC-V and relational baseline interview ensure assessment is trauma-informed and holistic.
Leadership and Management: Self-evaluation	Section 12	Headteacher monitoring cycle includes work scrutiny, data review, learning walks and annual policy review.
Safeguarding: Information governance	Sections 5, 10	Initial Assessment Reports and ongoing records shared

		appropriately with LA, Virtual School, care team and therapist.
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