

**beatrice tate school**

## Assessment of Student Progress

### Introduction

The assessment of progress for secondary-aged learners with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) and Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) requires a highly individualised approach. These learners often demonstrate progress in small, non-linear steps, making traditional assessment methods inadequate. Effective assessment systems must be holistic, capturing achievements across communication, cognition, physical development and social-emotional skills, while remaining flexible to adapt to each learner's emerging needs.

Beatrice Tate School has developed and refined its assessment, recording, and reporting (ARR) system over time to ensure that teachers can effectively track students' progress, diagnose strengths and weaknesses, and improve teaching and learning. This document explores the principles of measuring progress, evaluates evidence-based frameworks such as the Engagement Model, and highlights Beatrice Tate School's *Student Tracking, Assessment, Recording, and Reporting System* (STARRS). This discussion focuses on how STARRS addresses limitations in traditional systems by offering tools for longitudinal tracking, demographic analysis, real-time formative assessment and ongoing refinement of learning objectives.

## Understanding progress for PMLD and SLD learners

Progress for learners with PMLD and SLD is deeply personal, reflecting their unique abilities and developmental priorities. The *SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 Years* (DfE, 2015) emphasises the importance of recognising individual potential and focusing on outcomes that enhance quality of life.

Assessment for these learners must encompass multiple domains, including:

1. **Communication** – Developing intentional communication, such as eye gaze, vocalisations, or using assistive technologies.
2. **Physical Development** – Building motor skills, mobility, and sensory processing.
3. **Cognition** – Engaging with tasks through exploration, problem-solving, and anticipation.
4. **Social-Emotional Skills** – Strengthening self-regulation, social connections, and self-awareness.
5. **Independence and Preparation for Adulthood** – Developing life skills, self-care, and decision-making to support greater autonomy.

These diverse developmental areas require adaptable systems to assess progress holistically while identifying and responding to each learner's emerging needs.

Beatrice Tate School's assessment, recording, and reporting procedures ensure that:

- The learner is at the heart of assessment
- Assessment provides a holistic view of the learner
- Assessment informs teaching and learning
- Judgements about progress are reliable and moderated

## Assessment principles

### 1. Individualised Baselines

Both observational and formalised baseline assessments are essential for capturing each learner's starting point. These baselines are informed by multidisciplinary insights and tailored to reflect the student's EHCP objectives.

At Beatrice Tate School, teachers in Phase teams, moderated by the Phase Assistant Headteacher, assess and develop Learning Objectives using a wide range of frameworks, including:

- **Welsh Routes for Learning** – Supporting the assessment of cognitive and communication skills.
- **Inclusive Technology Switch Progression Roadmap** – Guiding progress for learners using assistive switch technology.

- **PIVATS** – Performance Indicators for Valued Assessment and Targeted Learning is used to assess progress in key areas such as:
  - Reading
  - Writing
  - Speaking and Listening
  - Mathematics
  - Personal, Social, and Emotional Development (PSED)
- **Movement Assessment and Training Programme (MATP)** – Focusing on motor and physical development for learners with complex needs.

These sources ensure that baselines are accurate, holistic and aligned with each student's developmental priorities.

## 2. SMART Targets and Learning Objectives

Learning Objectives, derived from a student's EHCP Objectives, provide a foundation for assessing progress. These objectives are designed to be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) and are reviewed termly by phase teams to ensure they remain relevant to the learner's current needs.

For example, a SMART target might involve a student using a switch to activate a preferred sound three times during a sensory session, demonstrating both communication and physical skills. Regular reviews ensure that objectives reflect the learner's development and respond to emerging needs identified through ongoing assessment.

## 3. Holistic and dynamic frameworks

Holistic frameworks provide a comprehensive view of progress, capturing achievements that extend beyond academic learning. The *Engagement Model* (DfE, 2020) is particularly suited to learners with PMLD, focusing on five key indicators: exploration, realisation, anticipation, persistence, and initiation.

Beatrice Tate School complements the *Engagement Model* with the *Mapping and Assessing Personal Progress* (MAPP) framework. MAPP evaluates progress across four dimensions:

1. **Independence** – the performance of tasks with reduced support.
2. **Fluency** – the completion of tasks with increased efficiency.
3. **Maintenance** – the retention of skills over time.
4. **Generalisation** – the application of skills in new settings or contexts.

The integration of these frameworks within STARRS enables teachers to track both engagement and functional application, providing a holistic and detailed assessment of progress.

## 4. Collaboration with parents and guardians

Beatrice Tate School prioritises collaboration with parents, guardians and other stakeholders in the development, review and moderation of Learning Objectives. This approach ensures that objectives are meaningful, aligned with the student's needs, and informed by a range of professionals and family members.

Key methods of collaboration include:

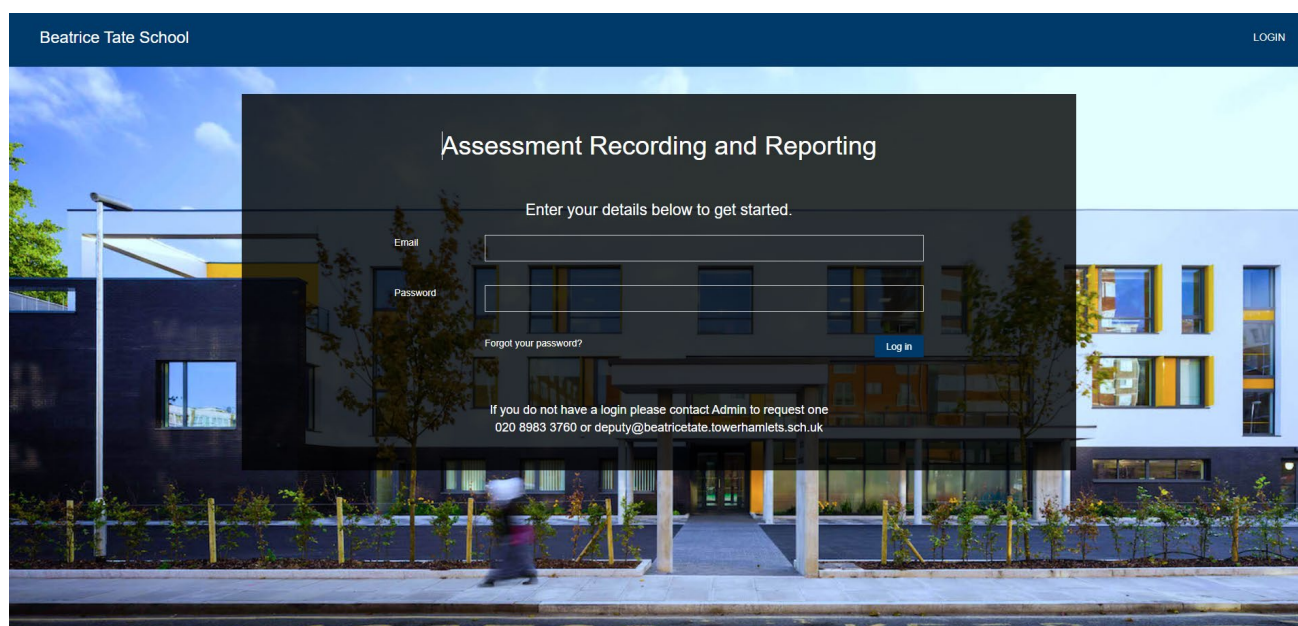
- **Parent-Teacher Meetings:** Held annually during the Autumn Term, these meetings provide an opportunity for parents and teachers to coproduce and review Learning Objectives. Parents share valuable insights into their child's strengths, challenges and aspirations, contributing to personalised and relevant targets.
- **Input from specialist therapists:** Learning Objectives are regularly informed by input from physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, and music therapists. These professionals work closely with teachers to ensure that objectives are achievable and address specific therapeutic goals.
- **Regular communication:** Beatrice Tate School maintains strong communication with parents through home-school books and online platforms such as Class Dojo. These channels enable consistent updates on progress and allow parents to provide ongoing feedback, ensuring that Learning Objectives remain dynamic and responsive.
- **Celebration of progress and achievements:** Parents and students are actively involved in celebrating progress and achievements through fortnightly Good Work Assemblies and termly Jack Petchey Achievement Award Assemblies. Each Tutor Group nominates a student who has demonstrated exceptional effort, progress, or achievement in learning or personal development. These achievements are further celebrated at borough-wide events, including the annual LBTH Jack Petchey Achievement Awards evening and the Tower Hamlets Education Awards.
- **End-of-Term Reports:** Parents receive detailed end-of-term reports that summarise their child's progress towards Learning Objectives. These reports include photographic and video evidence compiled through the STARRS platform, providing a comprehensive overview of the student's achievements.

By fostering close collaboration with parents, guardians and therapists, Beatrice Tate School ensures that Learning Objectives are reflective of each student's unique needs and that progress is shared, recognised and celebrated. This collaborative approach strengthens the partnership between school and home, supporting the holistic development of our learners.

### **Beatrice Tate School's STARRS Platform**

The *Student Tracking, Assessment, Recording and Reporting System* (STARRS) is a bespoke platform developed by Beatrice Tate School to address the challenges of assessing, recording, and reporting progress for PMLD and SLD learners. This system supports both formative and summative

assessment, linking evidence-based observations to individual Learning Objectives that are reviewed and adjusted termly to remain relevant.



## Key Features of STARRS

### 1. Formative assessment and identification of emerging needs

Teachers use STARRS to record photo and video evidence of student progress during lessons, directly linking these observations to Learning Objectives. This approach captures not only progress within the specific objective but also highlights emerging needs or unexpected achievements. For example, if a student demonstrates a new skill or preference during an unrelated activity, this evidence is used to inform and update future Learning Objectives, ensuring that the system remains dynamic and responsive.

### 2. Longitudinal tracking

STARRS creates a visual *Learning Chronology* for each student, mapping their progress over time. This longitudinal tracking enables teachers, families, and professionals to identify trends, celebrate successes, and address persistent barriers to learning.

### 3. Demographic analysis and targeted intervention

STARRS has the capacity to track progress by specific group characteristics, including gender, ethnicity, and free school meal (FSM) eligibility. This feature helps identify potential disparities or barriers and provides insights into areas or groups requiring targeted intervention.

### 4. Integration of holistic frameworks

The platform incorporates the MAPP framework to assess progress across independence, fluency, maintenance, and generalisation. This ensures that both engagement and functional skills are recognised and celebrated.

### 5. Moderation and collaboration

Learning Objectives are developed collaboratively by phase teams and moderated by the Phase Assistant Headteacher. This ensures that objectives are aligned with EHCP outcomes and reflect the student's current and emerging needs.

### **Addressing the limitations of traditional systems**

STARRS resolves several limitations of traditional assessment systems:

- **Static objectives:** Termly reviews ensure that Learning Objectives evolve to reflect the learner's progress and emerging needs.
- **Lack of insight into emerging needs:** Photographic and video evidence enables the identification of progress outside specific objectives, providing a richer picture of the learner's capabilities.
- **Narrow focus:** By incorporating the MAPP framework, STARRS captures progress across multiple dimensions, highlighting both engagement and functional application.
- **Limited long-term perspective:** The *Learning Chronology* allows progress to be mapped over the student's time at the school, providing a narrative of their development.
- **Lack of contextual analysis:** Group analysis by demographic factors enables targeted interventions and ensures equitable outcomes.

### **Conclusion**

The assessment of progress for secondary-aged PMLD and SLD learners requires systems that are flexible, holistic, and centred on the individual. Frameworks like the *Engagement Model* and tools such as STARRS demonstrate best practice by capturing nuanced, incremental progress while responding to emerging needs. By integrating formative and summative assessment, demographic analysis, and longitudinal tracking, the bespoke student tracking and assessment, recording and reporting system (STARRS) developed by Beatrice Tate School ensures that progress is meaningful, inclusive, and aligned with each student's unique journey.

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