

Connect is a long-standing independent parents' organisation and the only Scottish charity which is dedicated to parental engagement in education. We provide membership services to individual Parent Councils and PTAs, as well as offering advice and information to individual parents who have concerns about any aspect of the education of their child, or the wider education system. We support education professionals in developing their skills and understanding around effective partnership working with families and the wider community.

We are disappointed with the independent review's recommendation to continue the SNSA for P1 pupils. We have always argued that these tests fly in the face of the ideals of Curriculum for Excellence where children at this stage should be learning through play. We continue to support the Play Not Tests campaign led by Upstart Scotland.

It is concerning that the review needs to recommend there be a "clear and irrefutable statement of the purpose and uses of P1 SNSA data" when this should have been clearly defined and communicated before the assessments were introduced.

The review does acknowledge our concerns around communication with parents. The focus should always be on good quality conversations between parents and teachers on how best to support children's learning, not teaching to the test in a national data gathering exercise. Schools and local authorities have to be transparent: parents can only withdraw their children if they know about their right to do so, and about the assessments themselves.

More needs to be done to address the confusion over the diagnostic function of the assessment, and how this has led to impression the SNSA can diagnose additional support needs of individual learners, when instead it means the SNSA is to identify issues in the curriculum. This must be rectified with a communications campaign to parents which sets out clearly what the SNSA does, and what it cannot do, to help learners, combined with clear messages about parents' rights in relation to the tests

There is no mention that some local authorities continue to set their own standardised assessments, alongside SNSA. There must also be an end to the dual running of assessment which pertains in some areas, where children sit the local authority's own assessment as well as the national Standardised Assessment.

The review plays down concerns over the potential for the SNSA to become high stakes, saying that this should not happen purely because they were not designed to be, and that the Scottish Government has said they will not be used for accountability. However, the Committee's own review into SNSA highlighted the potential use of FOIs to gain access to data to create league tables: one of Connect's significant concerns at the outset.

While the review recommends additional support and guidance for teachers, we are concerned how effective this will be at a time when teachers are already expected to absorb and act on swathes of guidance and policy from the Scottish Government and Education Scotland.

We are glad the review saw 'scant' evidence of distress amongst the 26 children observed taking the SNSA. However, our own survey of parents and feedback we've received from teachers show

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that for some P1 children this has been an upsetting experience. If the education system is to truly get it right for every child, it is vital all children are not forced to go through a one size fits all process. The review was a missed opportunity to give more consideration and ask specific questions on how suitable the SNSA is for P1 pupils with additional support needs or English as an additional language.

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