

East Renfrewshire SNSAs

The Committee issued a call for views on its upcoming inquiry on standardised assessments and did not receive any responses from local authorities. The Committee would very much appreciate your input to the inquiry.

Specifically, the Committee seeks the perspective of your local authority on the following questions:

1. If you conduct standardised assessments at local authority level as well as SNSAs in your schools, do you plan to retain the standardised assessments at local authority level as well as SNSAs in the long term? If so, please provide some detail on:

- a. the reasoning for this (what it provides that SNSA cannot),**
- b. which assessment you use from which provider, and**
- c. the annual cost of the local authority standardised assessments.**

East Renfrewshire schools use our own standardised assessments (aligned to CfE levels) in reading and mathematics at P3, P5, P7 and S2. Our schools have used ERC standardised tests for many years and currently have significant amounts of historical data at an individual, stage and school level; the summative information is used formatively to help teachers support pupils.

The Scottish Government has committed to helping the authority to develop bridging arrangements which will link existing standardised test data to the new SNSA data. This was expected to take place during 2017-18. It is expected that the existing standardised assessments will be replaced by SNSAs following the bridging process and the full development of the current SNSA. As such, we anticipate continuing to use standardised assessments in 2018-19 and 2019-20.

The total annual budget for standardised assessments is £36,000.

2. Does your local authority seek to guide your schools as to when in the academic year SNSAs should be carried out? If so, please provide details and the rationale for your approach. If your local authority does not prescribe a particular timescale for SNSAs, are you aware of any practice within your schools where senior management teams prescribe the timings and, if so, what do you consider to be the benefits of this approach?

To ensure ERC schools continue to be able to use standardised assessments to track the progress of individual pupils and groups of pupils in a valid and reliable way, a broad

timeframe during which assessments were administered was agreed by a local authority working group, which included a representative from East Renfrewshire's LNCT.

All P1, P4, P7 and S3 pupils take the assessments during the six weeks directly following the school holidays in April. Head Teachers, in consultation with their staff,

agree the most appropriate time for the assessments to be carried out during that period. The choice of an assessment period towards the end of the school year was felt to be beneficial for a number of reasons including:

- This would support schools in tracking individual pupils and groups of pupils over a period of time allowing valid and reliable indications of progress;
- Depending on when schools issue school reports, the diagnostic information would be available for teachers to incorporate into pupil reports;
- The results of each child's assessment, along with all other assessment information, would be available to be shared with their next year's teacher, so that future learning can be planned and progress in learning is continuous;
- The assessment information would help to inform teacher professional judgements of progress with CfE levels in advance of the annual submission to the Scottish Government in June; and,
- The timing provides a number practical benefits in terms of IT provision.

3. Are you aware of the extent to which the results of SNSAs are shared with parents and, where age appropriate, children? Is there a local authority level policy on sharing this information? (for example, to aid development including learning at home with parental involvement)

The Education Department, by means of a short life working group (consisting of a range of senior school staff, Education Department officers and representatives from professional bodies), produced guidance to support the implementation of the Scottish National Standardised Assessments in January 2018. This guidance advises schools that relevant SNSA data should be shared with parents/carers; this is in keeping with the Education Department's guidance on sharing information regarding the Council's standardised assessments with parents/carers.

Schools did communicate with parents during 2017-18 regarding implementation of the SNSAs and to answer any questions or concerns which they had. As a consequence, the Education Department was contacted by only one parent who wished for their child to be removed from the assessments.

It should be borne in mind that one key purpose of SNSAs was to inform teacher judgements. As such the information which teachers will share with parents is his / her Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) judgement of progress against the national benchmarks, verified or otherwise by the results of the standardised assessment.

In 2017-18, specific information regarding a child's performance in the SNSA was not shared by schools with parents/carers or pupils, unless explicitly requested by parents/carers. This was due to the intermediate step of providing a Capacity Region to categorise a child's performance in the assessments with the change to a long scale standardised assessment score being used from 2018-19 onwards. Schools felt that to provide a capacity statement in 2017-18 would confuse parents/carers and children alike and would not support longitudinal analysis of a child's progress. Senior and middle school leaders, as well as staff at appropriate stages, have accessed and analysed the data provided by the SNSA and have used this information to support and reinforce their understanding of areas of strength and areas for further improvement, and to plan appropriately to meet learners' needs.

This analysis, along with continuous ongoing formative and summative assessment information

supports members of staff when reporting to parents/carers on the progress of their child(ren).

Primary 7 SNSA data is shared with secondary schools after transition to S1; this is automatically transferred by the online system to allow appropriate secondary staff to access the information.

4. Given the results of SNSAs are being analysed and reported on at a national level (linked below), are you provided with a breakdown of performance at local authority level of the results? Are you provided with a breakdown at school level or smaller cohorts (class level for example or for SIMD areas)? How will this data be used to improve education in your area?

East Renfrewshire, as is the case for all 32 local authorities, receives a dataset for those pupils who have undertaken the SNSA assessments – information is provided at an individual pupil level. This dataset includes the performance of pupils as defined by a Low, Medium or High Capacity, a long-scale score, the outcome for each question asked (correct/incorrect) as well as the component area and type of question asked. Additional information for each child such as the SIMD value of their location of residence, additional support need status and any tag values recorded by schools is also included.

As previously described in question 1, the Scottish Government has committed to helping the authority to develop bridging arrangements which will link existing standardised test data to the new SNSA data. The Education Department will be working to incorporate the SNSA data into its local attainment and achievement tracking databases for each educational establishment. This database provides each member of teaching staff within a school with attainment information for each child in relation to local standardised assessments and Curriculum for Excellence teacher judgements. Teaching staff use this information to identify areas of strength and areas of development and to plan learning. The information is also used to support teachers' in their determination of a child's level of progression through Curriculum for Excellence. The SNSA data will add to the existing data set and will support these judgements, with the expectation of replacing the local standardised assessment.

5. How are you collating evidence on how the SNSAs are bedding in at local authority level? For example, the benefits to the teachers and as a consequence the children and young people or any practical concerns with how the tests are operating (resource issues including technology and also staff time, unintended consequences etc.)

The Education Department works closely with school leaders and gathers opinions and experiences in the use and benefit of SNSAs to staff and pupils. Information on the implementation and use of SNSA is gathered through discussion at local authority Head Teacher meetings, Head Teacher forums, training sessions, Education Officer meetings and through informal dialogue with school leaders.

Further SNSA training offered to all local authorities will be offered to East Renfrewshire's schools in 2018-19 and the Council will be working closely with its SNSA Support Officer to develop staff ability in interpreting data further.

The general feedback from school leaders has been very positive with recognition of the benefit of SNSA. Very few issues have been recorded. Issues tended to relate to IT issues such as bandwidth and differentiation of questions; IT issues were resolved by working closely with the Council's IT Department whilst question differentiation has been addressed in the recently published ACER national report.