

City of Edinburgh Council 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.*

As a council well used to standardised assessments, we had few concerns about the implementation of SNSAs and in fact welcomed a CfE-friendly assessment which would enhance other modes of tracking progress in learning. We also appreciate that this is a new system and that some initial issues could and did occur, however at time of writing, we remain committed to maintaining this approach across our network of schools.

To confirm: we are using SNSAs in all schools, with the exception of one primary school where there was significant objection from the Parent Council. The Headteacher there, through discussion with his school community, opted to use GL Assessments, which had previously been our preferred supplier. The costs are approx. £5k for that school to fully implement GL Assessments.

Standardised assessments are used to plan targeted supports and interventions, and assess progress for learners with additional support needs. These assessments are administered by Support for Learning teachers. The York Assessment of Reading Comprehension (GL Assessments) is the assessments most commonly used. The cost of purchasing a complete resource pack is £275.

Learners in special schools do not routinely use SNSAs due to their complex additional support needs, which affect their ability to access these assessments.

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?

Through consultation with LNCT we did not mandate an assessment 'window' and informed schools that they should reach decisions at school level. As the process of conducting standardised assessments is well embedded in the City, many schools

simply switched brand and continued in the same way as before. Assessments were carried out in most primary schools in May and June.

The benefits of this approach relate mostly to how SNSAs fit within the overall rationale for assessment, i.e. to inform teacher judgement, to provide information on transition and for reporting. Most schools feel that this approach simplifies arrangements for all concerned.

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)

SNSAs or other standardised assessments are not routinely shared with parents or learners. They may be discussed during Child Planning Meetings or be used to inform pupil support/assessment information.

At this time we do not specify sharing or otherwise. Our policy is being updated and will include specific information on this aspect.

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?

Yes, our data analysts provide Quality Improvement Officers with information which is cut for various cohorts, including equity cohorts. As SNSA scores are one of many ways to assess progress, we use this data with other information, such as ACEL and with our local knowledge of schools. We maintain a Capacity and Risk Register in which this information is discussed and actions agreed. Our Headteachers are fully aware of their capacity and risk, and supported or challenged to continue to improve. In practical terms this means that schools may receive additional visits from officers, engage in learning and development, or other leadership opportunities.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-national-standardised-assessments-national-report-academic-year-2017-2018/>

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.)

We are currently compiling information to report to our Education Children and Families' Committee in March. This is being done through discussion with senior leaders in schools and the professional associations. This approach ensures that we are fully aware of the strengths and challenges of the system. The scope of the report is broader than SNSAs, as it covers updated advice to staff on Assessment in the Broad General Education.

