

**Education and Skills Committee  
Scottish National Standardised Assessments  
Wednesday 20 February 2019**

**LOCAL AUTHORITY SNSA PERSPECTIVES**

**Introduction**

On 21 December 2018, the Convener wrote to the Directors of Education regarding local authority perspectives on the SNSAs. A copy of the letter can be found [here](#). Responses to the Convener's letter were received from 21 local authorities. This paper provides a summary of these, set against each of the questions asked.

**Q1. 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.**

Eight authorities stated outright that they do not use any other form of assessment, just the SNSAs.

A further five authorities replied that while other standardised assessments have not been retained at local authority level, individual schools were using (or deciding whether or not to continue to use) other assessments. Authorities stated that when schools chose to use additional assessments the costs of these are borne by the school, not the authority. Moray Council wrote that they had schools which had continued to use PIPs/INCAS: "predominately ... to track small cohorts within PEF funding and are not undertaken through SNSA. This has been for small groups and not whole stages."

Edinburgh City Council stated that they were using SNSAs in all schools, except for one primary school where 'significant' objections had been raised by 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".

Inverclyde and North Lanarkshire Councils were less definitive in their responses, stating there were 'no plans' to retain other forms of standardised testing at authority level.

North Lanarkshire wrote: “there are no plans to retain the standardised assessments at local authority level, only SNSAs are to be used for the long-term. Individual schools do have authority to access and use other assessments should they decide to pay for them.”

South Lanarkshire Council, in addition to the SNSAs, is using “standardised assessment to support our development work in literacy and numeracy with groups of targeted schools.”

The schools participating in the targeted literacy programme use the New Group Reading Test (NGRT) from GL Assessments as a cost of approximately £800 per year. The tests are used to establish baseline information on reading comprehension at the start of Year 1. The test is administered again at the end of Year 1, and in Years 2 and 3 to measure progress and the impact of intervention work. A similar programme for numeracy will be introduced later this year.

Four authorities continue to use other tests alongside SNSAs, across the local authority. Glasgow City Council stated they use the SNSA alongside other standardised assessments (covering maths, progress in reading, and spelling) as they: “complement formative assessment approaches by adding reliability and rigour”. The Council highlighted that they do not use standardised assessments for all pupils.

East Renfrewshire use their own standardised assessments in reading and mathematics at P3, P5, P7 and S2, due to the: “significant amounts of historical data at an individual, stage and school level” from these. The authority further stated that: “the summative information [from this data] is used formatively to help teachers support pupils.” The authority has a commitment from the Scottish Government to support them in developing a bridging arrangement to link the existing data and SNSA information. Once this is completed they do not plan to continue using their own standardised assessments. They anticipate using their own assessments until 2019-20. The budget for these assessments is £36,000.

West Lothian Council conducts CAT assessments at S1. This is a ‘long-standing’ practice which provides cognitive ability information for all pupils and is used to track senior phase attainment. The cost of these assessments (bought from GL Assessments) was £22,576 in 2017-18.

North Ayrshire uses GL Assessments for P3, P6 and S2 pupils to evaluate progress in English and Maths. The annual cost to the authority of these tests is £85,000.

**Q2. 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?**

Nine councils replied that they do not set a time during which the SNSAs are to be carried out, stating that this was a decision to be made at the individual school level. For example, Dumfries and Galloway Council wrote: “teachers are encouraged to use their professional judgment in determining when children and young people are assessed.” Argyll and Bute stated that they did not set an assessment window as: “SNSA is used to confirm and support professional judgement.”

Orkney Islands Council, who do not set an assessment window, explained that they had made Head Teachers aware that the SNSAs: “must be administered as and when pupils are ready to be assessed. This has led to significant discussion with Head Teachers about the practicalities of this and the information gained from it.”

In contrast, Inverclyde Council wrote: “The authority does not support the idea of “testing a pupil when they are ready” as the tests are not designed to be used in this way. We are also wary of individual teachers choosing to test pupils late in the academic year because this may give the best perceived results.”

Although Inverclyde Council does not set a formal window for testing, it recommends that the SNSAs take place between January and March as the tests are formative and this allows time for pupil absence. Other councils, including Fife and South Lanarkshire similarly do not prescribe when the SNSAs are to be carried out but do recommend a time of year for the assessments in local authority guidance.

Both Renfrewshire Council and Shetland Islands Council stated that they had implemented an assessment window in 2017-18, but this practice would not continue in the 2018-19 session. North Ayrshire stated that during the first year of the SNSAs they: “guided schools as to when would be best to carry out assessments due to the timing of SNSA training roll-out for practitioners.” The authority has not continued to give schools a guidance, advising schools to carry out the SNSAs at a time which best suits the needs of the school.

Of the remaining five councils that set a window, Falkirk Council stated that it conducts the SNSAs for P4, P7 and S3 pupils during September/October as they considered it more useful to have the results early in the session and: “use these [results] as a sign post towards the recording of the level at the end of the session. In addition, they use the individual reports to determine any specific support pupils might require. P1 pupils are tested in April/May in order to give them time to settle into school.

East Renfrewshire states that all pupils (P1, P4, P7 and S3) take the SNSAs in the six weeks directly following the April school holidays. East Renfrewshire provided several reasons for the use of a specific time period:

- It enables schools to track individual pupils and groups of pupils over a period “allowing valid and reliable indications of progress”;
- It makes diagnostic information available for teachers to incorporate into pupil reports;
- In addition to other assessment information, a pupil’s SNSA results, can be shared with their next year’s teacher to enable planning of future learning;
- SNSA information helps inform teacher judgements of CfE progress in advance of the annual submission to the Scottish Government in June.

P1 and S3 pupils in Moray take the SNSAs in May; P4s in January and P7s in March. The Council wrote that this allows for: “consistency across the authority in order to support technical and data analysis approaches as well as supporting our tracking and monitoring processes as well as a strong focus on diagnostic uses of this type of assessment.”

In West Lothian P7 and S3 pupils take the SNSAs prior to mid-November so that schools can: “use diagnostic information to inform next steps and curriculum decisions before transition to secondary and Senior Phase respectively.” P1 and P4 pupils are assessed between February and May to inform pupil progress.

Highland Council stated clearly that the SNSAs are to be used for diagnostic purposes only, to support planning for the next stages of learning. The council noted that it is useful to do the assessment in stage or groups at a time and have set ‘broad times’ for the majority of pupils/schools, appreciating that there may be occasions when these are not appropriate for a pupil/teacher planning. The windows are as follows:

- S3 pupils are assessed between September and November
- P4 & P7 pupils are assessed between January and March
- P1 pupils are assessed between March and May

**Q3. 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 majority of authorities responded that SNSA results are not directly shared with parents but can be used as part of a wider discussion with parents about attainment and pupil progress.

Falkirk Council referred to the information from SNSAs being shared at parents’ evenings and in pupil reports, while Moray Council stated that schools share ‘high-level’ messages with parents as part of progress reporting and has followed national guidance on how SNSA information should be

shared. North Lanarkshire stated that it was aware of parents asking Head Teachers for SNSA results but that schools: “explained that the purposes of the assessments are to complement and ratify the results of the teacher professional judgements.”

Inverclyde Council offered the below text from the guidance it has issued to schools:

“Should I let parent know that the assessments are being administered? The link to the SNSA has a page for parents and it is advisable to make them aware of the link through your normal communication processes. This is simply one part of an ongoing assessment process and should not be given undue focus. The assessment is to support teachers’ judgements and parents should be reminded that the results form only a part of the ongoing assessments to form a judgement. As with any information held on a pupil, whilst parents have a right to know about individual assessments if they so require, the totality of the judgements should be discussed rather than individual test results in isolation.”

Glasgow, Midlothian and West Dunbartonshire reported that they did not have a policy on sharing the results of SNSAs with parents. Orkney Islands Council said: “schools are working with the service to evaluate the information before sharing”.

East Renfrewshire, Shetland Islands and South Lanarkshire Councils stated that information from the SNSAs would be directly shared with parents if they explicitly requested it. Dumfries and Galloway reported that it held no central information on the practice of sharing SNSA results with parents but that it had not been raised as issue by teachers.

Edinburgh City Council noted that they currently do not specify that this data should/should not be shared but is currently updating its policy which will include reference to this. Both Midlothian and West Dunbartonshire Councils reported that they do not have a policy on the sharing of SNSA results with parents.

Only South Ayrshire was definitive that, in keeping with previous practice concerning standardised assessments, it did not share the outcomes of the SNSAs with either parents or children as: “our view [is] that the results are to enable teachers to better support children and young people ... we are still at the early stages of fully understanding the results and the ways in which they can be meaningfully understood by everyone involved.”

In response to this question, councils made reference to other usage of SNSA data. For example, Fife Council stated SNSA data was being used as an: “an-going part of learning, teaching and assessment ... Data received will inform next steps in planning for children and young people.”

Glasgow City Council wrote that the SNSAs are ‘one source of information’ which teachers can use to inform planning and contribute to their professional

judgement. Similarly, South Ayrshire Council wrote: “our view [is] that the results are to enable teachers to better support children and young people.” The council further stated that: “we are still at the early stages of fully understanding the results and the ways in which they can be meaningfully understood by everyone involved.”

**Q4. Given the results of SNSAs are being analysed and reported on at a national level, 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?**

Eleven councils offered information about data breakdown. South Ayrshire Council wrote that they are given access to all of the available information on the SNSA sites for schools – including high capacity region and individual level results. These sites have filters that allow for the information to be broken down by class, year stage, deprivation and ASN. According to the council, schools – but not the local authority - can create their own tags in the data. South Ayrshire was the only authority to refer to this. The council is provided with a spreadsheet that allows it to work out the overall performance at South Ayrshire level.

Dumfries and Galloway Council stated that within the authority spreadsheet they receive each row represents a pupil, with metadata about overall assessment and performance on individual questions. This spreadsheet can be used to breakdown by SIMD, ASN, gender, etc. East Renfrewshire also reported receiving a dataset for those pupils that have sat the SNSAs, with information provided at a pupil level, with additional information regarding SIMD and ASN. 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.”

Similarly, the Director of Education at Midlothian Council wrote that they receive a local authority report that they can ‘interrogate’ with targeted groups if necessary. West Dunbartonshire stated that they use the ‘raw data’ provided by the SNSAs to conduct an analysis at school and authority level.

Additional work with the data appears to have been undertaken by some by a few authorities. Edinburgh City Council wrote that its data analysts provide Quality Improvement Officers with information broken down across different cohorts, including equity cohorts. In Highland, the data team have provided schools with an overview of trend data from Curriculum for Excellence and the SNSAs to allow schools to make a comparison.

Falkirk Council highlighted that one of its officers had made an enquiry as to the ability of the council to access an authority report within the live system, but were informed this was not possible. As a result, the council stated, if they wish to create an authority report for numeracy they would need to download information for each school at P1, P4, P7 and S3 level – repeating the exercise for reading and writing.

Regarding the use of data, at school/classroom level, authorities reported using SNSA data to: support learning; inform forward planning; help plan interventions and confirm teachers' professional judgements.

At local authority level uses of SNSA data included: identifying trends; recognising areas of improvement and supporting the allocation of resources. For example, Argyll and Bute Council wrote that: "data is analysed at authority level to identify improvement activity and target resources effectively".

Multiple authorities (nine) stated that the SNSAs were part of a suite of information they used, for instance, North Lanarkshire stated that together with other attainment results and datasets such as ACEL, SNSA data was used to offer efficient and effective pupil support. Edinburgh City Council wrote that SNSA scores are one of many ways in which they assess progress and that they use the data together with other information, such as the ACEL and their local knowledge of schools.

South Lanarkshire said that they use a variety of data sources to examine their performance at local authority level, such as teacher judgement and SQA data, with information from the SNSAs providing another source of evidence for them to use in their evolution. The council also stated that they use SNSA information in conjunction with other data and filter the results by characteristics such as SIMD, gender, care experienced. This has been used to inform local authority improvement, set priorities and has: "been very useful in helping us to further identify and analyse our poverty related attainment gap."

Regarding the poverty-related attainment gap, West Dunbartonshire referred to using SNSA data: "as part of the ... school improvement strategy to raise attainment and narrow the poverty related attainment gap."

Glasgow City Council expressed caution about use of data commenting: "it is too early with just one year's data to be able to assess as to whether this information is useful and how effectively it would contribute to improvement." Orkney stated that it is: "anticipated in due course" that SNSA data will be used to support learning and teaching.

Regarding the data itself authorities raised some issues. Falkirk Council noted that the late provision of 2017-18 session data, combined with the reporting of high/medium/low capacity performance results meant that the data had had limited use for those cohorts. Renfrewshire Council wrote that: "the lack of labels on the long scale means that it is difficult to draw conclusions about overall attainment."

Training for teachers as to how to interpret the SNSA data was referenced by Glasgow City Council: "training in the analysis of SNSA data and diagnostic use of the assessments has been well received across the city." Regarding data analysis, Falkirk Council stated it has produced its guidance for schools on how to interpret the data and how to make use of it regarding improvement and Highland Council have provided CPD for head teachers to support them in using the data to inform improvement.

**Q5. 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 primary source of feedback reported by authorities were Head Teachers with information gathered through Head Teacher Advisory Groups; forums; development days and regular meetings between Heads and authorities. Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers (LNCTs) were also mentioned as being involved in discussions around the SNSAs and as a way of disseminating feedback from staff about their implementation.

Various other methods of evaluation were mentioned. South Lanarkshire has collected information about the administration of the SNSAs via a local survey with schools, while Highland Council are monitoring the use of SNSAs via the Quality Improvement Team at authority level and Quality Improvement Officers at school level.

Edinburgh City Council are preparing a report, informed through discussion with senior leaders in schools and the professional associations, for its Education Children and Families' Committee to review in March. Glasgow City Council's Policy Development Committee discussed an 'Update on SNSAs' report in its meeting on 31 January.

West Dunbartonshire Council stated that: "It is early to give a definitive answer on the embedded nature of SNSA", but highlighted that they are: "working with Scholar as part of a research project into the use of SNSA for improvement."

Ten authorities offered brief commentary as to how the SNSAs were progressing in their responses. Glasgow City Council wrote in its report to the Policy Development Committee that the pilot and initial phases have both proved successful with: "class teachers being confident in their own professional knowledge and understanding of a learner's progress to make informed decisions about the timing and level of assessment to be undertaken as well as whether it is appropriate for learners with additional support needs to be presented for assessment."

Shetland Islands Council commented that: "in a large majority of cases, teachers found that the SNSA data confirmed their judgement of their pupils' capacity". Orkney reported that staff are 'generally comfortable' with the administration of the SNSAs, which was done class by class and often carried out by Head Teachers or senior management. The council's response further stated: "in discussion with staff, however, Head Teachers emphasise the flexibility that staff have to administer the tests as and when they feel appropriate may result in more challenging and time-consuming issues."

East Renfrewshire stated that: "general feedback from school leaders has been very positive with recognition of the benefit of SNSA". The Council noted that 'very few issues' had been recorded and that these tended to relate to IT



problems and the differentiation of the questions. The council also stated that it will be working closely with its SNSA support officer to develop staff in interpreting the data.

IT, and the availability of technology, was raised as an issue by four authorities. For example, North Lanarkshire stated that feedback it had received suggested that practical issues such as the use of computers for pupils would need to be reviewed to ensure the SNSAs were carried out efficiently. The Council noted that the availability of staff to supervise the assessments would also have to be considered but further noted: "it has been universally accepted that there are real benefits to the SNSAs and that any issues encountered in the first year of implementation can be overcome in the subsequent session."

Moray Council stated that technology had not been an issue, with most schools following procedures that had been in place for previous assessments. The council noted that: "there is still a need of wider training on SNSA and data analysis and use outwith specific practitioners."

South Lanarkshire reported that results of its survey found that 73% of respondents rated the training as good, very good, or excellent, going on to state: "most respondents found that the implementation of the SNSAs had worked well and a number of minor challenges were raised, mostly around technicalities of implementation."

P1 assessments were noted as an area that 'caused concern' by Dumfries and Galloway Council, with Shetland Islands Council stating that in the main concerns expressed by teachers regarding the 2017-18 session related to P1 assessments. Falkirk Council concluded that: "In the main, the P4, P7 and S3 assessments were conducted successfully this session. Obviously, schools learned much from year one and were able to adapt and develop their approaches."

**Kate Wane**  
**SPICe Research**  
**11 February 2019**

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The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP [www.parliament.scot](http://www.parliament.scot)

## Responses from Local Authorities

- [Argyll and Bute](#)
- [Dumfries and Galloway](#)
- [East Renfrewshire](#)
- [East Lothian](#)
- [Edinburgh](#)
- [Falkirk](#)
- [Fife](#)
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- [Midlothian](#)
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- [North Lanarkshire](#)
- [Orkney](#)
- [Renfrewshire](#)
- [Shetland](#)
- [South Ayrshire](#)
- [South Lanarkshire](#)
- [West Dunbartonshire](#)
- [West Lothian](#)

The Committee did not receive responses from:

Aberdeen City  
Aberdeenshire  
Angus  
Clackmannanshire  
Dundee City  
East Ayrshire  
East Dunbartonshire  
Na h-Eileanan Siar  
Perth and Kinross  
Scottish Borders  
Stirling

## ***Argyll and Bute***

### **Scottish National Standardised Assessments**

As for the inquiries on standardised assessments made by the Committee I shall answer to each of your questions as follows: -

1. If we conduct standardised assessments at local authority level as well as SNSAs in our schools: -
  - We do not have standardised assessments in addition to SNSA;
  
2. If the local authority seeks to guide schools as to when in the academic year SNSAs should be carried out and how would they plan to do so: -
  - The local authority does not get involved in setting timelines for SNSAs as SNSA is used to confirm and support professional judgement;
  - An end date is set so that data can be used to inform and support professional judgement with respect to achievement of a level data for literacy and numeracy that is submitted to Scottish Government in August;
  - The schools will decide if a child will undertake SNSA assessment and when;
  - Senior management teams prescribing timings is not a model in place in Argyll and Bute.
  
3. If the results of SNSAs are shared with parents or children: -
  - Parents are given an overall assessment process but not a specific feedback on the results of SNSAs.
  
4. If at a local authority level, we are provided with a breakdown of performance of the results or with a breakdown at school level or smaller cohorts and how this data will be used to improve Education:
  - Data from SNSA is used to inform and support professional judgement in literacy and numeracy for achievement of a level data. This data is analysed at authority level to identify improvement activity and target resources effectively;
  - Feedback data from SNSA for each child is used by the

school/teacher to plan appropriate intervention for improvement as part of a suite of tools that the teacher can use.

5. How we are collating evidence on how SNSAs are bedding in at local authority level: -
  - Evidence is collated as part of feedback on the process from schools;
  - Head Teacher Advisory Group and Trade Union representatives also feedback on this at joint meetings.

Douglas Hendry  
Executive Director

## **Dumfries and Galloway**

### **SNSA**

*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 the annual cost of the local authority standardised assessments.*

From session 2017/18 we stopped as a local authority undertaking other authority wide standardised assessments.

Schools in D&G may however have chosen to purchase additional Pips/InCAS from our previous provider CEM, there is no cost to the authority as this is a school's own individual choice.

The previously used CEM assessments evaluate performance, monitor progress and indicate potential in specific and helpful ways. As a result, teachers and schools are able to provide individuals and groups of children with learning opportunities to enable them to achieve their best. The assessments can be used in class to monitor progress of interventions used as are able to be used more frequently than once every 3 years.

Provides diagnostic information on the strengths and weakness of pupils in: Reading, including; word recognition, word decoding, comprehension and spelling. Maths, including: Number, measure, shape and space, data handling.

Uses a Developed Ability measure to show a child's potential.

*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?*

We do not seek to guide our schools as to when in the academic year SNSA should be carried out, this is an individual school decision. Teachers are encouraged, in consultation with their managers use their professional judgement and available information in determining when children and young people are assessed to meet individual needs. Schools have been issued with Dumfries and Galloway policy guidance on SNSA which supports this position. Within this there is information taken from a number of schools' plans showing an emerging picture of when assessments are carried out.

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)*

Information regarding this is not collected centrally. Headteachers have not raised this as an issue or concern. Our SNSA policy guidance does provide good practice guidance with regards sharing the information and working with parents to support their involvement. Headteachers are also directed to the document 'Assessing Children Progress: A guide for parents and carers' which has been produced by Scottish Government to support schools work with parents and carers to develop their understanding of these new assessments.

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?*

We are provided with an authority spreadsheet. Each row in the spreadsheet represents an individual child or young person who has completed the relevant assessment. A variety of metadata about the learner is provided, drawn from SEEMiS, along with information about the learner's performance on the assessment at the whole assessment and at individual question level. This spreadsheet can be manipulated to school and stage level as well as SIMD, ASN, FME, Gender, LAC, EAL and Ethnicity. This information provides an additional source of evidence to support our raising attainment strategy and improvement work across the authority.

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.)*

It is our intention to undertake a review at the end of this session which will allow us to collate evidence on how SNSA is bedding in. Last session schools encountered a number of problems which were mainly associated with the individual schools choosing not to undertake the assessments until the end of the session for a variety of reasons. P1 assessments and the use of available technology would be identified as the two areas which caused most concern last session.

## ***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.

## ***East Lothian***

Additional support needs – school support staff

**Local authorities and COSLA were mentioned, in particular, as being comfortable with the decision to merge categories, as pupil support assistant more accurately reflects the support provided in schools at present. For reference, the Committee intends to write to all local authorities seeking their perspective on: what information they collect and hold on the numbers of school support staff supporting children with an ASN; what training is provided for staff; and what guidance they have in place on the naming of job roles.”**

Agree that there are a number of titles used between and within Local Authorities to categorise the role of the adult supporting children and young people in schools. This variation will make it impossible to compare and contrast and look for patterns.

A number of titles are used within East Lothian (e.g. Additional Support Needs Auxiliary (ASNA); Classroom Assistant; Playground Supervisor; Dining Room Supervisor). There is a grade difference with ASNA on a higher grade to reflect their specific role in supporting children and young people with more complex additional support needs (e.g. administering medication, changing, feeding etc.). However, all staff in our schools work together to support children and young people with additional support needs and this is not solely the responsibility of ASNA's. For this reason, the category of pupil support assistant does, at this time, more accurately reflect the support provided in schools at present and encapsulates a wider group of staff/job titles who are involved in supporting children and young people with additional support needs (including both ASNA and classroom assistants).

Looking at categories of staff cannot give an overall picture of the resource supporting children and young people with additional support needs. To focus solely on ASNA's would not provide an accurate picture.

Training and support is provided to all staff when required rather than to specific groups of staff. There is a comprehensive CLPL directory in place in East Lothian that can be accessed by all staff. A support staff conference is held annually and is accessible by a range of staff in our schools who support children and young people. The support staff conference incorporates professional learning requests from our staff as well as professional learning planned by the authority to enhance the skills and experience of staff. Guidance on job roles is clear and in line with HR and union policies and procedures in this area.

East Lothian Council would welcome clearer guidance on job role names which in turn would allow more consistency.

## **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.

## ***Falkirk***

### **Response for the Education and Skills Committee**

Falkirk Council previously used CEM assessments across all of our schools at stages P1 (PIPS), P3, P5, P7 (INCAS) and S2 (SOSCA). When SNSA was introduced, the decision was made to stop using CEM.

Following consultation with a representative group of Headteachers and Depute Headteachers from primary and secondary schools, the decision was made to conduct the assessments at the following times:

P4, P7 and S3 – at any point during September/October  
P1 – at any point during April/May

There are several reasons for identifying these specific times. In P1, it was felt that the children needed time to settle into school and gather the necessary skills and confidence to allow them to complete the assessments successfully. The individual reports would then be used alongside other evidence to determine achievement of Early Level.

For P4, P7 and S3, it was thought to be more useful to have the results early in the session and to use these as a sign post towards the recording of the level at the end of the session. Schools could then make use of the individual reports and the information within to determine any specific support that was required for individual pupils.

It was also considered appropriate that all children in the same stage be assessed in either the first half or second half of the year, as it relates to the national norming studies. This provides schools and the authority with a consistency regarding the data and allows high level messages to be drawn out at these times. For example, if it was discovered that pupils in a particular stage had a weakness in a specific area of reading then this could be addressed with the cohort, or indeed addressed by the authority if the issue was more widespread.

The time periods set are sufficiently broad to allow schools to determine the best time within the window to assess pupils.

Some schools are sharing information with parents as part of their overall engagement at parents' evenings and in pupil reports.

As an authority we have developed guidance for schools on the sharing of data based on what is suitable and can be easily understood by parents.

The reports within SNSA have been developed around the individual and schools and we support that approach. An authority report was made available at the end of session 2017-2018 although this came so late and was based around high, medium and low that it had limited use with regard to impact on those cohorts. We did do some analysis between SNSA capacity

and achievement of CfE levels.

Following an enquiry by one of our officers, we have been informed that there isn't a solid timeline in place to provide access to an authority report within the live system. To create an authority report at present for numeracy would involve a download for each and every one of our schools at P1, P4, P7 and S3. This would need to be replicated for reading and writing. We look forward to this report being available and hope that it comes at a time that we can make use of the data appropriately.

The authority has produced guidance for schools on how to interpret their data and how to make use of it with regard to improvement. Officers will continue to work with schools in this regard.

In the main, the P4, P7 and S3 assessments were conducted successfully this session. Obviously, schools learned much from year one and were able to adapt and develop their approaches.



## **Fife**

### **SNSAs**

- 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 is provided that SNSA cannot),**
  - b. which assessment you use from which provider, and**
  - c. the annual cost of the local authority standardised assessments.**

#### **Response**

We do not conduct alternative standardised assessments at a local authority level as well as SNSAs in our schools. However, because our schools had been very comfortable (prior to the introduction of SNSA) using PIPS, some of them decided to retain use of this, at least in the initial stages of SNSA.

- 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?**

#### **Response**

Through consultation with school staff, in the first year of SNSA, they themselves felt that there were times of the year that might be best to conduct SNSA. These were only ever suggestions and all Fife schools still retain the autonomy to assess pupils out with these times.

- 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).**

#### **Response**

We do not know the full extent to which the results of SNSAs are shared with parents.

In our guidance for schools we state that:

- SNSA data will be used as an on-going part of learning, teaching and assessment.
- Data received will inform next steps in planning for children and young people.
- Information from our assessment activity should be shared with parents through

discussion as part of the normal on-going parent/school dialogue on the learning process for individual children.

**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 small cohorts (class level for example or for SIMD areas)? How will this data be used to improve education in your area?**

**Response**

We use all data available to us to support local authority and school improvement.

Schools make use of school and class level data to support improvement in learning and teaching.

**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).**

**Response**

Individual schools use data as part of their planning, tracking and monitoring systems within school and plan next steps for learning and teaching. After the first year of implementation SNSA data was used by Local Authority to identify trends across all schools at P1, P4, P7 and S3, this information was shared with all schools. Local authority regularly seeks feedback from Headteachers on any practical concerns and these have been shared with Scottish Government.

***Glasgow City Council***

**Response from Glasgow City Council to letter of 21 December from  
Education and Skills Committee**

**SNSAs**

I am attaching a copy of our most recent Committee report on SNSAs which was discussed today 31 January 2019. This provides our position on the use of SNSAs and the numbers of pupils at each stage that used the SNSAs in 2017/18.

In response to your specific questions:

1. As set out in the paper, we do not use standardised assessments for all pupils. Schools will use a range of assessments with groups of pupils to inform their teaching and learning.
2. As set out in the paper, we do not set out a time period.
3. We do not have a set policy on the sharing of the outcomes of the SNSAs. We view SNSAs as one source of information which teachers will use to inform their planning and contribute to their professional judgement of a child's progress. Teachers/headteachers would share the information if they felt that it helped the child and/or parent improve learning.
4. We received a wealth of data on the assessments. However, it is too early with just one year's data to be able to assess as to whether this information is useful and how effectively it would contribute to improvement.
5. The attached report provides a summary of SNSAs.

Maureen McKenna  
31 January 2019



Glasgow City Council  
Policy Development Committee

**Item**

31 January 2019

Report by Executive Director of Education

Contact: Donald MacLeod, Head of Service Ext: 74551

**UPDATE ON SCOTTISH NATIONAL STANDARDISED ASSESSMENTS**

**Purpose of Report:**

To update and inform Committee on the administration guidance and progress of Scottish National Standardised Assessments.

**Recommendations:**

The Committee is asked to consider the contents of this report.

Ward No(s):

Citywide: ✓

Local member(s) advised: Yes  No  consulted: Yes  No

## **Background**

- 1.1 Almost all local authorities in Scotland have been making use of standardised assessments for a number of years. The Scottish National Standardised Assessment (SNSA) now provides for a consistent approach being taken across local authorities. SNSA is provided by ACER International UK Ltd and is an adaptive, standardised assessment, based on aspects of the Curriculum for Excellence in Literacy and Numeracy. The assessment offers a series of adaptive questions set at an appropriately difficult level in response to learner's individual answers. Information generated provides diagnostic information to support teachers in planning next steps in children's learning and to inform their professional judgment on pupil progress. It is within the context of the National Improvement Framework but in itself cannot provide full evidence of achievement of a level within Curriculum for Excellence, that is, the assessment supports the teacher's professional judgement.
- 1.2 SNSA assessments were successfully piloted across 44 schools in Glasgow during session 2016/17 and have been available to all schools since August 2017 for learners in P1, P4, P7 and S3. In line with Glasgow's guidance for use of all assessments, the purpose of SNSA is to support and inform future learning by providing information on the strengths and development needs of individuals and groups of learners. An extensive training programme from SCHOLAR on analysis of SNSA data is being delivered across the city to support the effective diagnostic use of these assessments in raising attainment.
- 1.3 Education Services does not specify particular standardised assessments to be completed by all. Our position has always been that assessment is for learning and, where appropriate, headteachers and teachers should use assessment information to support their professional judgement. SNSA together with other standardised assessments being used across the city (MALT: Maths Assessment for Learning and Teaching, PIRA: Progress in Reading Assessment, NGRT: New Group Reading Test, SWST: Single Word Spelling Test) complement formative assessment approaches by adding reliability and rigour. They provide robust information that contributes towards a range of evidence to support the professional judgement of teachers. Helping to identify learners' progress in demonstrating the required breadth, challenge and application of knowledge, understanding and skills to achieve the expected level of attainment.

## **2. Progress**

- 2.1 As a local authority Glasgow does not specify any particular time of year when SNSA should be administered. This decision is taken at school level in discussion with class teachers, who are best placed to decide when it is most appropriate for individual children to undertake assessments that will support planning for the next stage of their learning. Year 1 data (2017/18) indicates that SNSA were administered across the city between March and June 2018. Further data will be required to establish any patterns or change in patterns of administration.
- 2.2 Local authority guidance on the administration of SNSA states that they should take place within the everyday learning environment of children and young people, set within the context of familiar learning experiences. Class

teachers use their knowledge of a child's progress to identify the most appropriate assessment level for an individual to undertake. The SNSA system is designed to be compatible with a wide range of assistive technologies to support a variety of additional support needs or English as an additional language needs. As a result the local authority has issued clear guidance to ensure that any barriers to accessing SNSA for children and young people are removed. Practitioners who work with children and young people with additional support needs use their knowledge and understanding of the child and their needs, strengths and challenges to reach a decision on whether or not the use of standardised assessments is appropriate. Year 1 data (2017/18) on the percentage of children and young people completing SNSA below reflects this practice.

### 2.3 Percentage of children and young people completing SNSA at each stage 2017/18.

	Local Authority roll by stage at 2017 census	% of roll completed assessment (June 2018)
P1 Literacy	6047	64.0%
P1 Numeracy	6047	69.7%
P4 Reading	5970	83.9%
P4 Writing	5970	80.7%
P4 Numeracy	5970	86.2%
P7 Reading	5435	84.7%
P7 Writing	5435	84.6%
P7 Numeracy	5435	86.2%
S3 Reading	4527	66.4%
S3 Writing	4527	65.9%
S3 Numeracy	4527	65.8%

2.4 In December 2018 a launch of the Gaelic Medium Standardised Assessments took place. The assessments were co-created and quality assured with the close involvement of the Gaelic Medium Education sector. Further releases of assessment content are planned for March and July 2019 and will provide an opportunity to make further improvements.

## 3. Findings

3.1 The use of SNSA in Glasgow is at an early stage with limited data available at present to identify trends in its use.

3.2 The initial pilot phase (2016/17) and Year 1 roll out (2017/18) have both proved successful with class teachers being confident in their own professional knowledge and understanding of a learner's progress to make informed decisions about the timing and level of assessment to be undertaken as well as whether it is appropriate for learners with additional support needs to be presented for assessment.

3.3 Training in the analysis of SNSA data and diagnostic use of the assessments has been well received across the city and will continue to support practitioners to identify and address gaps in learning for children and young people.

#### 4. Policy and Resource Implications

##### Resource Implications:

<i>Financial:</i>	Within existing resources for training and support.
<i>Legal:</i>	Not applicable
<i>Personnel:</i>	Within existing resources
<i>Procurement:</i>	Not applicable

**Council Strategic Plan:** Excellent and Inclusive Education - 22

##### Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

*Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2017-22* Outcome 7: Literacy & Numeracy – improved attainment.

*What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?* Diagnostic nature of SNSA will continue to identify individual gaps in learning for females /males which can be addressed to close any attainment difference between genders.

*Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio economic disadvantage.* Diagnostic nature of SNSA will continue to identify individual gaps in learning for children which can be addressed to narrow the poverty related attainment gap.

##### Sustainability Impacts:

*Environmental:* Not applicable

*Social, including Article 19 opportunities:* Not applicable

*Economic:* Not applicable

**Privacy and Data Protection impacts:** Agreements are in place with Scottish government to protect identity of children when data is collated.

## **5. Recommendations**

The Committee is asked to consider the contents of this report.



## **Highland**

### **SNSA**

In relation to SNSA and standardised assessment, we recently completed a survey with head teachers across Highland, the feedback suggested most schools found having broad set times in the year beneficial for testing so we have set broad assessment times this session for the different stages accordingly. Most comments and options were to complete earlier in the session (with exception of P1), to allow time for children to improve towards achievement of a level by June. We do not currently undertake any additional testing across the pupil population in Highland.

We have been very clear that these assessments should be used for diagnostic purposes only to inform planning for next steps in learning. While it will likely be useful to do this in stages / groups at the same time, there may be occasions where it is not a suitable time for an individual or a school with regard to pupil's pace of learning and / or teacher planning. So, broad times are set for the majority of pupils / schools but not necessarily all.

Broad times to carry out assessments are recommended as:

- **S3 – Sept – Nov**
- **P4 & P7 – Jan - March**
- **P1 – March – May**

The data is available at a school and local authority level and we have provided CPD for head teachers to support them in using their own data to inform improvement. The data team have provided trend school CfE level data with this year's SNSA school data and schools were given a Highland overview for both for comparison.

We are monitoring the use of SNSA through our Quality Improvement Team at an authority level and through individual Quality Improvement Officers at an individual school level.

Should you require any further specific detail on the responses provided in relation to these areas of interest, please do not hesitate to request this.

Yours sincerely

**Sandra Campbell**

**Interim Director of Care and Learning**

## ***Inverclyde***

### **Scottish National Standardised Assessments**

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.

**Inverclyde Council have no plans to retain other forms of standardised testing at authority level after the 2017/18 academic year.**

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?

**We have issued guidance agreed through our LNCT that states there should be no testing window, however it is recommended that testing takes place between January and March. The authority does not support the idea of “testing a pupil when they are ready” as the tests are not designed to be used in this way. We are also wary of individual teachers choosing to test pupils late in the academic year because this may give the best perceived results. Experience of administering tests tells us that there will always need to be some additional time given to finishing the tests because of absence etc. It is unfair on both pupils and teachers if tests are administered too late in the year.**

**“Because the assessments are formative, Inverclyde are suggesting that the assessments should ideally take place between January and March. However, it is accepted that some assessments may be administered earlier if there is a strong justification to do so. If it has not been possible to assess a child before March, then the assessment can be administered later. The assessments give valuable information on a pupil’s strengths and areas for further development that can help to support teacher judgements to inform next steps in learning”**

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)

**Please see below our guidance to school**

**Should I let parent know that the assessments are being administered?**

**The link to the SNSA has a page for parents and it is advisable to make them aware of the link through your normal communication processes. This is simply one part of an ongoing assessment process and should not be given undue focus. The assessment is to support teachers' judgements and parents should be reminded that the results form only a part of the ongoing assessments to form a judgement. As with any information held on a pupil, whilst parents have a right to know about individual assessments if they so require, the totality of the judgements should be discussed rather than individual test results in isolation.**

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?

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

**As an authority we have undertaken no central analysis of SNSA results for the academic year 2017/18. We will continue to work with our schools to provide self-evaluation data packs to inform their Standards and Quality and Improvement Plans. If schools find it useful then head teachers may choose to share headline SNSA data across schools.**

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.)

**Inverclyde work alongside head teachers, LNCT and assessment co-ordinators to evaluate the use and implementation of tests. This has been long established practice when previously using other forms of standardised assessments.**

**Ruth Binks**

**Corporate Director**

**Education, Communities & Organisational Development**

## **Midlothian**

SNSA Responses: Midlothian responses in bold

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.

**Longer term, we do not plan to retain other standardised 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?

**We have allowed schools to decide themselves on the most appropriate time to administer the SNSA.**

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)

**We do not have a policy and have not widely shared this 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?

**I am provided with a local authority report which I can interrogate with targeted groups if necessary. I also discuss results with schools to ensure intelligent use is being made of the data.**

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 collated feedback from all practitioners who administered assessments last session. Results were fed back to schools, our LNCT another appropriate departments eg Digital Services.**

**Schools Group Managers discussed results with Head Teachers alongside their Teacher Judgement Survey results to see what use was being made of them.**

## **Moray**

### **SNSAs**

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),

**A few schools in Moray have continued with PIPs/INCAS through CEM; this has been predominately schools that are using this to track small cohorts within PEF funding and are not undertaken through SNSA. This has been for small groups and not whole stages. This has also supported confidence in Teacher Professional Judgements in the early stages of the reporting on ACEL and until they were confident in tracking and monitoring. This provided a range of data to inform and support their judgements, and other retained this to be able to track robustly attainment over time using a consistent data set.**

b. which assessment you use from which provider, and

**CEM – PiPs entry and exit in P1, Incas in P3 and P6 and Midyis in either S2 or S3**

c. the annual cost of the local authority standardised assessments.

**This varied considerably, dependant on school and cohort sizes, and was always recharged to schools to pay through DSM**

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?

**For SNSA last session a local authority rationale was produced and agreed by Headteachers and LNCT, this provided an “assessment window” as this had been previously in place through the use of other means of standardised assessments. This allowed consistency across the authority in order to support technical and data analysis approaches as well as supporting our tracking and monitoring processes as well as a strong focus on diagnostic uses of this type of assessment. At the end of the first year of implementation, all HTs and schools were consulted on this and the overwhelming agreement was to maintain this with ongoing review in place.**

**P1 – May**

**P4 – January**

**P7 – March**

**S3 - May**

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)

**Schools are sharing high level messages with parents as part of progress reporting. We have used national advice on how this information should be shared.**

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?

**Last session we had done analysis within the council at each stage and this had been further supported by the SNSA data pack issued in June 2018 to provide a semblance of analysis. This has given an overview of gender, SIMD, ASN etc and has been used centrally last year as a snapshot of the assessment and our performance across the authority in literacy and numeracy. The use of more specific parameters with regard to performance will further support this as an element of data for use to support monitoring of progress, tracking of interventions as well as learning conversations within schools. This data is a part of a wider data set that schools and the central team use to monitor performance and identify a range of improvement initiatives and the impact that these are making.**

**Our rationale includes a focus on:**

- **school tracking and monitoring discussions**
- **supporting learners through learning conversations**
- **assisting practitioners with teacher professional judgement of achievement of anticipated levels**
- **support discussion with parents on individual pupils' progress in learning**
- **discussion with quality improvement officers on standards and attainment in the school**
- **discussion with Education Scotland on tracking and attainment**
- **demonstrating progress and informing the local authority NIF action plan and progress report**
- **support improvement planning within the school**

**Our review and evaluation at the end of the first session findings were as follows:**

- **Time allocation – most schools thought this was about right**
- **Alternative formats – few schools used alternative approaches**
- **Adaptive approaches for learners – most schools felt this supported all learners in their progress through the assessments**
- **Assessment windows – almost all schools who responded wanted to retain this, with few alterations suggested for timings**
- **Inclusivity of assessments – support staff helped pupils as they would in class so assessments were felt by almost all schools to be inclusive**
- **Impact on pupils – some children demotivated with amount of reading and scrolling to be undertaken, staff required to keep them on task**

- **Use of data – some schools have used the data tentatively while others have rigorously scrutinised data for tracking and improvement planning purposes. Further training and support required for some schools**
- **Workload issues – mainly for supporting P1s and support staff in facilitating the assessments; PTs English and Maths in secondaries**
- **Quality of training and further support – most were happy with this and there will be additional training in session 2018/19**
- **Any other comments - readings assessments had a great amount of reading in them and the writing assessments were felt to cover spelling and grammar**

<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 collated this information last session and used this as part of our performance information data set in place to monitor improvements and overall attainment management. This session we are currently deciding how we will collate and use this information as the reporting from SNSA in June was too late of ongoing support and challenge of schools.**

**Technology has not been an issue in the main and most schools are following successful procedures that they had in place for previous standardised assessment processes thus our schools are well placed for the organisation and management of SNSA. There is still a need of wider training on SNSA and data analysis and use out with specific practitioners**

**The data gathered has been used and will continue to develop for a range of purposes:**

- **add to the picture that the teacher already has about a child's progress in their learning**
- **provide teachers with useful information about learning that will assist them in planning next steps**
- **provide one part of the range of evidence which teachers will use to support progress in learning**
- **provide a potential source of evidence, which may be shared in context, in the course of discussions with parents/carers about their children's progress**
- **provide school leaders with a source of evidence that complements the wide range of other evidence, allowing them to manage and plan for improvement in the future**
- **inform improvement and self-evaluation strategies**

## **North Ayrshire**

**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.**

We currently use GL assessments; but only for learners in P3, P6 and S2, where progress assessments are carried out in English and Maths.

The annual cost across the authority for this is £85k.

**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?**

During the first year we guided schools as to when would be best to carry out assessments due to the timing of SNSA training roll-out for practitioners. This is no longer the case with schools advised to carry these out at a time that best suits the needs of the school.

**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)**

Decisions about reporting to parents are made at school level, in line with current guidance about parental involvement. There is therefore no specific policy at authority level governing the sharing of this specific 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?**

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

Schools are provided with their own performance information only. This is to enable schools to use the assessment data for diagnostic and planning purposes as intended. This information is discussed as part of routine quality improvement visits in individual schools. This data represents a range of sources of data to support teacher professional judgement. Comparator data is not collated or shared.

**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.)***

Staff have been asked for feedback and any issues arising. Visit 2 of our Quality Improvement Framework affords the opportunity to discuss standardised assessments at length and the benefits for staff

## **North Lanarkshire**

### **Response to: SNSA Questions:**

1. No there are no plans to retain the standardised assessments at local authority level, only SNSAs are to be used for the long-term. Individual schools do have authority to access and use other assessments should they decide to pay for them. Advice is offered through training from the Literacy Base and the Numeracy Hub in terms of suggested and appropriate assessments to offer a reflective picture of where pupils are on their journey with guidance on how to further take forward their journey of learning.
2. The local authority does not offer schools guidance as to when in the academic year the SNSAs should be carried out. The local authority clarified in communications with Head Teachers that it is down to their individual judgement to decide when to carry out the assessments in their own school. The local authority is not aware if there is any standard practice within the schools' senior management teams so to when to prescribe the timings. However, the progress of the SNSAs integration and practice is discussed during meetings with Head Teachers who are reviewing the timings of the SNSAs based on their year 1 experience. The local authority CIS Team engage in learning conversation with SMT/Head Teachers to support the tracking and monitoring systems within the schools and authority.
3. The local authority is aware that some parents have asked Head Teachers for the results of the SNSAs but schools have explained that the purposes of the assessments are to complement and ratify the results of the teacher professional judgements. There has not been a significant number of queries received for the information and it is believed that this is due to schools issuing Parental Guidance prior to the assessments being carried out that explained their purpose.
4. Yes the local authority has received a dataset that offers the opportunity for analysis of results in a similar format to those published at a national level. This includes breakdown to smaller cohorts such as year / stage, gender and SIMD. This data will be used in conjunction with other datasets such as ACEL and attainment data for review and analysis in order to offer efficient and effective support to pupils within schools so that they have every opportunity to make continuous progress across each of the CfE levels and to obtain the necessary qualifications that will allow them to embark upon their preferred career / learning pathway.
5. In order to understand how the successful the implementation and practice of the SNSAs has been, there is discussion at meetings with individual Head Teachers as well as at school cluster meetings. Meetings/discussions within Family Groups and through the SAC Team have promoted rigorous, rich dialogue in connection with pupil progress and highlighted the importance of measuring the impact of interventions to further enhance the progress. Feedback has suggested that the arrangements on a practical level such as the use of computers for the pupils and the availability of staff to supervise would have to be considered and reviewed in the schools in order to ensure the assessments were carried out efficiently. However, it has been universally accepted that there are real benefits to the SNSAs and that

any issues encountered in the first year of implementation can be overcome in the subsequent session.

## **Orkney**

### **SNSAs**

1. No
2. All Head Teachers have been made aware that SNSA must be administered as and when pupils are ready to be assessed. This has led to significant discussion with Head Teachers about the practicalities of this and the information gained from it.
6. At present schools are working with the service to evaluate the information before sharing.
4. It is anticipated that in due course it will support next steps in learning, teaching and assessment.
5. Staff in schools are using the assessments to inform Learning and Teaching (diagnostic). There have been some responses indicating the appropriateness of the S1 tests which would appear to impact on young children. Staff are generally comfortable in the way the SNSA assessments are administered as this has been done class by class and often by Head Teachers or Senior Management Team. In discussion with staff, however, Head Teachers emphasise the flexibility that staff have to administer the tests as and when they feel appropriate may result in more challenging and time-consuming issues.

The latest round of training by Scholar Webinar will be considered/evaluated this session as staff relate their training to the current round of tests. Currently the Local Authority are engaging with staff in using PIPS data sets with a view to a transition to SNSA. The Local Authority will also be looking at how the 'long scale' can help develop systems to use data to inform and target improvement – as yet we are not using SIMD in this process.

## **Renfrewshire**

### **SNSAs**

1a Standardised assessments are used in many primary schools to provide evidence at stages other than P1, P4 and P7. There are currently no tests available from SNSA at these stages. These assessments were previously funded by the local authority, but this funding ended in January 2019.

1b The provider is GL assessment.

1c Schools are currently making decisions on what testing to continue with and will be funding this from their own budgets. The total costs will be dependent on these decisions and is not yet confirmed.

2 Schools are able to test pupils at any point throughout the year. In 2017/18 there were two testing windows (for primary and secondary) but a decision was made not to continue this practice.

3 Schools are advised that they can share the results of the SNSA with parents as part of a wider discussion regarding pupil attainment. We do not record how frequently this happens.

4 We received pupil datasets and some summary data which is broken down by pupil characteristics in June 2018. We will be able to use summary data to identify patterns between curricular areas, and in the longer term, to track progression of cohorts. The lack of labels on the long scale means that it is difficult to draw conclusions about overall attainment. The detailed reports provided to schools will be used to provide insight into areas for development across the curricular areas. It will also be used to support primary transitions. The nationally published data is broken down by curricular areas which is information that we do not hold or receive.

5. Feedback from schools was sought at the end of the 2017/18 school year. Feedback received was largely focused around practical and resource issues. This exercise may be repeated at the end of the 2018/19 session.

## **Shetland**

### **SNSA**

Replies to the Committee's questions about SNSA are given below the 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.*

Shetland Islands Council does not conduct standardised assessments in its schools and does not plan to do so in the future. Some individual schools have conducted them in the past (e.g. PIPS), and a few are continuing to use them alongside SNSAs to gain data from all stages.

*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?*

In 2017-18, Head Teachers decided collectively, in discussion with local authority officers, to set a window between January and March for SNSA to be carried out in all schools. For 2018-19 Head Teachers and officers decided collectively that no window would be set at authority level.

In each school the Head Teacher is responsible for deciding the timing of SNSA each year. All do this collaboratively with their colleagues. A variety of patterns is emerging, which will be discussed at a Head Teachers' meeting at the end of the session. The collaborative approach ensures that all members of the school staff can explain the rationale for the decision the school has taken.

*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)*

Local authority guidance to Head Teachers suggests that they advise parents as follows: "No assessment outcome information will be sent home, but teachers may refer to them within the normal school reporting cycle or at Parents' evenings."

Schools generally share the results with parents only if directly asked to do so, and this has hardly happened so far. However, schools are using their SNSA data to help inform the conversations at Parents' Evenings and to help set targets for the next stage of learning.

*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?*

The data for each school provided by Education Scotland in Local Authority reports in summer 2017 was discussed with the school by its link Quality Improvement Officer. In a large majority of cases, teachers found that the SNSA data confirmed their judgement of their pupils' capacity. In a few cases, officers noted clear discrepancies between SNSA data and the final teacher judgement of level data for the same pupils. Officers discussed these cases centrally and then with the Head Teachers concerned, recognising that the SNSA data is only one part of the evidence used in judging achievement of a level.

A deeper analysis will be conducted for the 2018-19 set of data, in keeping with the more refined data and analysis that is expected at national level. Officers plan to correlate the SNSA data and the Achievement of a Level data and again to investigate discrepancies, while taking account of the specific nature of SNSA and of the time of year at which SNSAs were completed by each pupil.

*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 authority monitors the way the SNSAs are bedding in by periodic discussions with all Head Teachers at Head Teachers' Development Days, and by discussions held in individual schools with their link Quality Improvement Officers. At this early stage the only consistent message is that teachers have generally found the SNSA data to confirm their judgements.

The main concerns expressed by teachers in 2017-18 related to P1 assessments. It is too early yet to judge whether the changes to P1 assessments will reduce those concerns.

## **South Ayrshire**

### **Scottish National Standardised Assessments**

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:

**South Ayrshire does not carry out standardised assessments at authority level following the introduction of SNSA.**

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?

**South Ayrshire does not direct schools when to carry out standardised assessments. It is our view that this is a matter for class teachers in consultation with the school senior leadership team.**

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)

**South Ayrshire does not share the outcomes with children or parents, which is consistent with our previous practice relating to standardised assessments over a number of years. It remains our view that the results are to enable teachers to better support children and young people. In addition, we are still at the early stages of fully understanding the results and the ways in which they can be meaningfully understood by everyone involved.**

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?

**We are given access to all of the information available on the SNSA sites for schools (That is, high capacity region, individual level results). On these sites it is possible to choose filters to view information by any breakdown available, including class, year stage, deprivation, ASN and there are options for schools to create their own tags (though these cannot be created by the authority (e.g. for PEF tracking – something that the schools asked if we could look into).**

**In addition, at the centre we are provided with a spreadsheet with all children's attainment so we can, if we choose to, work out the level of performance ourselves at South Ayrshire level.**

<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.)



**The issues surrounding SNSAs have been discussed at the monthly head teacher's meetings as well as at the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers as necessary. Head teachers have been centrally involved in decisions around SNSAs. They have represented the views of the staff in their schools as have the trade unions through the LNCT.**

## **South Lanarkshire**

### **Scottish National Standardised Assessments**

**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:**

SNSAs are administered across all our schools in P1, P4, P7 and S3 in line with Scottish Government recommendations. We do not conduct any other local authority standardised testing collectively across all of our schools. However, we do use standardised assessment to support our development work in literacy and numeracy with groups of targeted schools.

**a) The reasoning for this (what it provides that SNSA cannot)**

A number of schools are currently involved in a targeted literacy programme. This is used to establish baseline information in year 1 of the programme on pupil reading comprehension. The test is then re administered at the end of year 1 to establish progress and next steps. Further testing is carried out at the end of years 2 and 3, to measure impact of the intervention work carried out and to ensure consistent progress.

Similar plans are in place for a targeted numeracy programme which will start this year with approximately 8 schools initially.

**b) which assessment you use and from which provider, and**

Literacy - Schools involved use New Group Reading Test (NGRT) from GL Assessment with pupils across P4-7.

Numeracy - Schools involved will use the Maths Assessment for Learning and Teaching (MALT).

**c) The annual cost of the local authority standardised assessments.**

Cost of the NGRT is approximately £800 per year.

Cost of the MALT is approximately £200 per year.

**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?**

The South Lanarkshire assessment guidance was created in partnership with school leaders and representatives from local associations. The guidance does recommend an assessment window. The rationale behind this approach was primarily a practical one as it better allowed for co-ordination of training and assisted forward planning by schools, especially in relation to the availability of IT. Schools are very much encouraged to use SNSAs as part of a holistic round of assessment activities. However, due to the standardised element it makes progress easier to identify if the tests are carried out at approximately the same time every year. We want to help our schools make the best use of all assessment data so that progress can be measured and next steps in learning planned. Adopting consistent timescales for standardised assessment allows schools to

make more valid comparisons relating to year on year improvements and also to compare the performance of children from one cohort to that of another. The SLC recommended timescale for assessments is during the months of April/May each session. Evidence from our schools suggests that this is the preferred model. It should be noted however, that if any individual schools feel that the recommended timescale is not beneficial for their learners, there is scope for schools to administer the assessments out with this recommended time-frame.

**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)**

Schools are advised to treat the information provided by SNSA in a proportionate way, taking account of the data alongside the wide variety of other methods of assessment employed and using this combined information to inform reporting to parents. When reporting to parents it is advised that discussions focus on the qualitative information the assessments provide i.e. the diagnostic information outlining pupil strengths and areas for development.

Parents and pupils will not routinely see the results of the online assessments as the reports are produced to support a teacher's professional judgement on a young person's progress. Should a request be made by any individual parent asking to see the results for their child, the information can be shared.

**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?**

We use a variety of data sources to examine our performance at local authority level such as teacher judgment levels around CfE and SQA data. The information provided by SNSA results provides an additional source of evidence. We are provided with a range of useful reports on the SNSAs, which allow us to look at results across the authority in each individual area of assessment, reading, writing skills and numeracy. We can use SNSA information in conjunction with other data to filter the results for specific characteristics such as gender, SIMD, ethnicity, FME, ASN, Care Experienced, and EAL. We have used this data to inform local authority improvement, set priorities and to support our schools to interrogate their own attainment data. The data has also been very useful in helping us to further identify and analyse our poverty related attainment gap.

**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 have collated views from schools on the administration of the SNSAs through a local survey. Results from the survey highlighted that training had been successful with 73% of respondents rating the training as good, very good, or excellent. All others rated the training as satisfactory. Most respondents found that the implementation of the SNSAs had worked well and a number of minor challenges were raised, mostly around technicalities of implementation.

The results of this survey have been used to inform further local training and authority guidance on the implementation of the SNSAs, as well as the updates made at a national level. Schools are kept up to date on any additional national guidance by email or other means as appropriate.

**Anne Donaldson**  
**Head of Education (Inclusion)**

## **West Dunbartonshire**

### **SNSAs**

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.

#### **We did not retain standardised assessments at local authority (LA) level.**

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?

**WDC does not guide schools when in the academic year to carry out assessments. We are not aware of any practices within our schools to prescribe the timings. However, we have advised Head Teachers to work in collaboration with staff at monitoring and review meetings to plan timescales for individual pupils and groups.**

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 LA is not aware of the extent to which the results of SNSAs are shared with parent and there is no policy on sharing this 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?

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

**WDC uses the raw data provided by SNSA to conduct an analysis at LA and school level. This data is used as part of the WDC school improvement strategy to raise attainment and narrow the poverty related attainment gap.**

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.)

Full details of the Committee's call for views and submissions are available on the inquiry webpage:

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/110246.aspx>

**It is early to give a definitive answer on the embedded nature of SNSA. However, WDC is working with Scholar as part of a research project into the use of SNSA for improvement. We are promoting with our Head Teachers the value of having a standardised form of assessment, like SNSA.**

## ***West Lothian***

### **SNSA**

In addition to SNSA, West Lothian Council conducts CAT assessments in S1. This is long standing practice to provides cognitive ability assessment information for all pupils, which is then used to predict optimised attainment and tracked through to senior phase attainment and achievement. CAT testing is provided by GL Assessments at a cost of £22,576.35 in 2018/19.

Through engagement with school staff and professional associations, an agreed programme of support for the administration and analysis of SNSA is in place. Almost all P7 and S3 pupils undertake assessments prior to mid-November in order to use diagnostic information to inform next steps and curriculum decisions before transition to secondary and Senior Phase respectively. P4 pupils and P1 pupils between February and May to inform progress and next steps at points of transition within the same establishment. This has been very well received by school staff and promotes collegiate approaches to analysing data to inform improvements at class and school level.

SNSA is used as one part of the suite of assessment information teachers use to inform teacher professional judgement. A summary of pupils' progress is shared on an ongoing basis with children and parents, and, where relevant, information from SNSA assessments may be shared.

The authority's Performance Team provides the Quality Improvement Team and Headteachers of high level analysis based on % of pupils at each of the bandings. More in-depth analysis at class level is undertaken and supported at school level.

An annual evaluation is being undertaken by the authority with all schools, and gathered on a Cluster basis to ensure efficiency of administration, implementation and analysis.

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