

States of Jersey

Assessment at Key Stages One and Two

Evaluation of the effectiveness of teacher assessments

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The context of the evaluation

This is the evaluation of a pilot study, already taking place, to replace 'Standardised Assessment Tests' (SATs) with assessments carried out by class teachers at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Schools involved in the pilot study were asked to volunteer to take part in this evaluation, and meetings were arranged with teachers and officers from the Department for Education.

The following activities provided the evidence on which this evaluation is based:

- School visits, discussions with teachers and headteachers, discussions with pupils, validation of teachers' assessments for pupils in Year 6 at:
 - La Moye Primary School
 - St John's Primary School
 - First Tower Primary School
- School visits, discussions with teachers and headteachers, validation of teachers' assessments for pupils in Year 2 at:
 - Les Landes Primary School
 - Janvrin Primary School
 - St Clement's Primary School
- Discussion with Year 2 teachers from most primary schools at Bel Royal Primary School
- Discussion with three representatives from Year 2 'cluster groups' at St John's Primary School
- Discussion with six teachers of Year 6 involved in the pilot study at Haute Vallee School
- Discussion with senior staff at Le Rocquier School
- Analysis of documents and discussion with Mr C Chipperfield

Summary of findings

Overall evaluation

The pilot study to replace SATs with teacher assessments is successful. This is particularly evident in the schools that have also developed an increased focus on pupils' learning with initiatives such as 'assessment for learning' and 'critical skills'.

In the schools visited, teachers' assessments are accurate and valid in both Years 2 and 6. The accuracy of these assessments is beginning to be moderated effectively through increasing liaison and co-operation between primary schools, and also between primary and secondary schools.

The Department for Education is managing the change to teacher assessments well. There is a willingness to establish best practice and to help schools to benefit from this as they implement teacher assessments instead of SATs.

Key strengths

- Teachers' assessments are accurate and valid in Year 2 and Year 6
- Teachers' morale is improved through the demonstration of trust in their professionalism
- Pupils state that their teachers know them very well and are pleased that lessons are aimed at meeting their learning needs
- Teachers' assessment is working best where
 - schools focus on developing ways to help pupils to learn
 - teachers internalise assessment levels rather than referring to documents or using tests to verify their assessment
 - assessment is used to plan the content of lessons so that it builds on what pupils already know
 - pupils are fully involved in their assessment and are confident in what they do well and also know what they are working to improve
 - teachers are working together to moderate their assessments
 - primary and secondary teachers have a shared understanding of the level descriptors for each subject
- Schools involved in the pilot now feel they hold accountability to meeting the needs of their pupils rather than solely being accountable to external bodies
- Teachers in Years 2 and 6 are able to give more time to the curriculum rather than devoting time to the preparation for formal tests

Key areas for improvement

- Schools are not yet spreading this good practice in assessment into other year groups, or using the information gained to demonstrate to themselves the value they are adding to their pupils over time and, hence, the success of their teachers
- Not all of the 'cluster groups' for moderating teachers' assessments are working as effectively as they could, and further co-operation is needed between primary and secondary schools
- Whilst assessment tools and procedures for most areas of English and mathematics are sufficiently robust, there is a need to further improve the methods for the assessment of science, pupils' speaking and listening skills, and pupils' personal development

Commentary

Teachers' assessments are accurate and valid in Year 2 and Year 6

A sample of the work of pupils in English, mathematics and science was analysed in each school, and discussed with the class teachers involved. In all cases, the teachers' assessments matched those of the reviewer and were also consistent with the British National Curriculum Level Descriptors in each subject. Where there was an occasional difference, it was never in excess of one sub-level. Further discussion regarding any differences revealed that the pupils themselves were working at the boundary between sub-levels and the final assessment depended on a decision about whether to mark the pupils concerned up or down. This level of accuracy is equally as valid as through the application of a standardised test, and has the added advantage that it does not depend on how well a pupil performs on one day of the year.

Teachers' morale is improved through the demonstration of trust in their professionalism

In all discussions, teachers reported that they feel more trusted as professionals. The opinion was expressed that external tests were having a negative impact on teachers' self-image as their professionalism was perceived to be judged on how well pupils performed on one particular day. The change of emphasis to teacher assessments has resulted in staff perceiving that their professional opinion is valued and this is, in turn, leading to a more positive self-image and the raising of morale.

Pupils state their teachers know them very well and are pleased that lessons are aimed at meeting their learning needs

Discussions took place with pupils in Year 6 in three schools visited. In all cases, pupils were confident, articulate and very thoughtful about the changes from tests to continual assessment. The majority of pupils feel that teacher assessment is a fairer method of judging their ability, and they also expressed satisfaction that their curriculum was not tied up with revision for tests. In all schools, pupils report that they feel their teachers know them very well. They gain this information from the targets that are set and the comments and marking that shows how well each pupil is doing. As a result, pupils are making sense of their curriculum and realise that lessons are planned and delivered to address their needs and to help them make progress.

Teachers' assessment is working best where

- *schools focus on developing ways to help pupils to learn*

In some of the schools visited, teachers were adopting an approach to learning based on recent training they have received on using assessment for learning. An outcome of this is that pupils themselves are more involved in evaluating their progress and have a clearer idea of how to improve. In addition, lessons are more closely matched to the learning needs of the class. In some other schools, teachers were giving an emphasis to 'critical skills' where pupils are asked to be more aware of how they learn and how they can work co-operatively with others to their mutual benefit. In both these cases, the accuracy of teachers' assessments was high and pupils' standards were rising above the levels measured by tests in previous years. Some schools visited were continuing with their practice much as before. In these cases, whilst the teachers' assessments were accurate and valid, pupils were

continuing to learn 'in the absence of tests' rather than in more precise and accurately targeted ways.

- *teachers internalise assessment levels rather than referring to documents or using tests to verify their assessment*

In all schools, teachers are becoming increasingly adept at using Level Descriptors to assess pupils' work. This practice is working best where teachers have a strong working knowledge of these Descriptors and can, for example, look at a piece of written work with a pupil and confidently state the level they have reached and what they need to do next to continue to make progress. The teachers concerned demonstrated that they have 'internalised' the Level Descriptors and, as a result, their lessons are more accurately focused, and their professional judgements are more secure. In addition, these teachers are able to carry out assessments throughout the year and find that this is now just part of their everyday working practice. In some schools visited, teachers were still referring to printed Level Descriptors and, in some cases, were still using test papers to check their professional judgements. For these teachers, assessment is still a cumbersome process and pupils are being unnecessarily examined.

- *assessment is used to plan the content of lessons so that it builds on what pupils already know*

Replacing formal tests with teacher assessments has resulted in some teachers having much more ownership of what is being taught and being clearer about the content of lessons. In these cases, lessons are planned to directly help pupils to build on what they can already do, as well as rectify any areas of misunderstanding. As a result, pupils report that they are much clearer about what they are learning and can see the reason for the objectives set in lessons. This is resulting in better learning for pupils than where lessons are planned solely to follow a syllabus or topic heading.

- *pupils are fully involved in their assessment and are confident in what they do well and also know what they are working to improve*

In some of the schools visited, the pupils were very clear about the Level at which they were currently working and were also clear about what they were learning to do next. Further discussion revealed that these pupils are fully informed by their teachers and, because they can see the reason for their learning, are motivated to strive to attain higher Levels. In addition, teachers are not comparing pupils with one another, but with themselves so that individual progress is the goal and lower attaining pupils are as confident about the progress they are making as their higher attaining peers.

- *teachers are working together to moderate their assessments*

Good practice was observed in teachers getting together with samples of pupils' work to moderate and validate the accuracy of their assessments. This work is effective in raising the confidence of teachers in their assessments as well as demonstrating a means by which assessments can be consistent throughout Jersey.

- *primary and secondary teachers have a shared understanding of the level descriptors for each subject*

Year 6 teachers report a discrepancy between the results of their assessments and the perception of teachers in Key Stage 3. As yet, there is no shared understanding between Year 6 and Year 7 about, for example, what constitutes a Level 5 in science. As a result, Year 6 teachers perceive that their assessments are sometimes 'down-graded' by their secondary colleagues. This has considerable implications for establishing the 'added value' for each pupil in every school. However, as a result of the pilot study, co-operation has begun between a primary and secondary school that is already leading to a shared understanding and consistency of assessment. This serves well as a model for the future and has the potential to lead to consistent assessment practices for pupils of all ages.

Schools involved in the pilot now feel they hold accountability to meeting the needs of their pupils rather than solely being accountable to external bodies

In visits to schools and discussions with teachers, the matter of accountability was raised. With formal tests, teachers perceived that they were being held accountable to external bodies. With the emphasis on teacher assessments, there is a perceived shift in accountability. Teachers agree that they and their work should be accountable and are now feeling that their duty, and hence their accountability, is to each individual pupil – to ensure that everyone is in receipt of the best possible educational experiences and making the progress they should. This is giving teachers a clear focus on meeting individual needs and is reinforcing the concept that 'they owe it to their pupils to give them the best deal they can'.

Teachers in Years 2 and 6 are able to give more time to the curriculum rather than devoting time to the preparation for formal tests

In all cases, schools and teachers report that a significant benefit of teacher assessments is that the whole school year can be devoted to learning. In previous years, teachers, particularly in Year 6, report that much of the Spring Term was devoted to revision, SATs took place in May, and the remainder of the school year was perceived by pupils as not really a full and valid part of their learning experience. This benefit means that pupils are now enabled to progress beyond the points where they previously may have stopped and has the potential to lead to higher standards for pupils on entry to Key Stage 3.

Schools are not yet spreading this good practice in assessment into other year groups, or using the information gained to demonstrate to themselves the value they are adding to their pupils over time and, hence, the success of their teachers

In the schools where teachers are assessing their pupils throughout the year, it is possible to analyse the progress each pupil has made. The results of this analysis show clearly that most of the pupils are doing well and that the teacher concerned has a positive indicator of the effectiveness of their work with the class. However, the benefits of teacher assessment, as detailed above, are not yet being extended to teachers of other Year groups. As a result, the progress made by each pupil is not being consistently tracked as they move through school and the schools have no measure of their effectiveness, in terms of the value they are adding to each individual over time. This measure has the potential of helping each school to realise its own success, as well as the success of individual teachers. In addition, there is a possibility that these measures of individual success could provide the States of Jersey with a more reliable indicator of how well their pupils are doing than that provided by analysis of test results.

Not all of the 'cluster groups' for moderating teachers' assessments are working as effectively as they could, and further co-operation is needed between primary and secondary schools

The establishment of cluster groups for teachers to share ideas, work together and ensure consistent evaluation and assessment processes is proving effective in some areas, but less effective in others. This is because the groups are empowered to take their own direction and plan for themselves how best to operate. As a result, some groups have got off to a good start and are, for example, sharing good practice and ensuring that teachers' assessments in English are consistent between schools. Other groups are still determining how best to operate and, without a clear lead, are not using time as effectively as they could. In addition, whilst some primary and secondary schools are working together to agree their use of Level Descriptors, there is, as yet, no mechanism to ensure that this good practice is extended to all schools.

Whilst assessment tools and procedures for most areas of English and mathematics are sufficiently robust, there is a need to further improve the methods for the assessment of science, pupils' speaking and listening skills, and pupils' personal development

In all schools visited, and in all discussions with teachers, assessment in English and mathematics was the most consistent and accurate. Teachers explain that they feel most confident in assessing most areas of these subjects. However, more detailed discussions revealed that a high proportion of teachers are less certain about their assessments in science; pupils' speaking and listening skills; and in assessing pupils' personal development. In science, schools are using a variety of assessment tools and placing different weightings on pupils' scientific knowledge base and their application of investigation and experimentation techniques. The resultant assessments are sufficiently accurate, but do not yet provide secondary schools with the information they require about pupils' abilities – as the interpretation of practical skills is different and relates to class-based experiments in primary school and laboratory based investigations in secondary schools. With regard to speaking and listening skills, teachers are confident to analyse pupils' reading ability and their written work but are less clear about the criteria to use to assess their oracy. In addition, a number of schools expressed a desire to include assessment of pupils' personal development along with their academic assessment so that they could present a view of the 'whole-child' and demonstrate the success for some pupils in, for example, learning to control their behaviour. Teachers are already beginning to investigate solutions to these areas and there is the potential for good practice to be shared so that all teachers feel equally confident in these areas for assessment.

Interpretation of the evidence gathered in different settings

1. Teachers of pupils in Year 2

Standards are at least as high as before

Comparison of current teacher assessments with the SATs results of previous years shows that the pilot study has had a positive impact on standards and pupils continue to do as well as in other years.

Assessment is allowing teachers to focus more on the children

Most of the teachers concerned feel that they have a better knowledge of the learning needs of their class and are more aware of how well each individual is doing. As a result, they are able to plan activities and lessons that more closely match the needs of the pupils.

Teacher assessments are accurate and valid in English, mathematics and science

In all the schools visited, the assessments carried out by the Year 2 teachers in these subjects were accurate and supported by clear examples of pupils' work that match the curriculum Level Descriptors.

Where schools are using 'Making Maths Make Sense' their assessments are valid

A number of schools are developing their use of a different approach to the teaching of mathematics. This has an 'inbuilt' process for continual assessment that is based on how well pupils understand and apply mathematical concepts linked to the amount of support they need and their ability to work unaided. This system, if completed rigorously, is valid and provides accurate assessments of mathematical ability that correlate well to 'National Curriculum Levels'.

Where teachers internalise the Level Descriptors, assessment is more accurate and easier – lessons are also pitched more accurately to pupils' needs

As already detailed, where teachers have internalised the assessment tools then the task becomes easier and all lessons more closely match the learning needs of the pupils.

Science is seen as a weaker area to assess, along with speaking and listening skills

The meeting with all the Year 2 teachers revealed that these areas are where teachers would like more guidance, as they are less certain of their abilities.

Cluster moderation is not yet working to full capacity

Only one of the three clusters represented at the meeting is already fulfilling its brief. The others have not really started and this opportunity for the sharing of best practice is not yet being utilised to the full.

2. Teachers of pupils in Year 6

Standards are rising where SATs have been replaced with rigorous attention to pupils' learning needs

The implementation of 'assessment for learning and critical skills', at the same time as raising the professionalism of teachers through the emphasis on their own assessments, is having a positive impact on pupils' attainments. As a result, in the schools visited where these strategies are to the fore, standards in English, mathematics and science have risen when compared to previous years.

Assessment is working best where pupils are fully involved in their own assessment and know their own Levels

Where teachers are 'letting the pupils in to the secret' the pupils are more in control of their own learning and are motivated to improve their rate of progress. They know, for example, why their current work is assessed at a Level 3A and are very clear about what they need to concentrate upon to reach Level 4C.

Teacher assessments in English, mathematics and science are accurate and valid

In all the schools visited, the assessments carried out by the Year 6 teachers in these subjects were accurate and supported by clear examples of pupils' work that match the curriculum Level Descriptors.

Teachers take time to internalise and refine assessment processes

Year 6 teachers who have entered the pilot study a year after their colleagues report that it takes time to learn, internalise and be confident in the assessment process. This has implications for teachers who change their year groups as they will require training and time to develop their skills.

Assessments in science are perceived as a weaker area

Some schools are investigating simpler strategies for assessing science, whilst others are using cumbersome procedures that take too much time. There is scope for the trialling of new procedures to establish key principles that can be applied consistently throughout Jersey.

Teachers feel less secure in their ability to assess speaking and listening skills than other areas in English

In common with teachers in Year 2, this appears to be an area where teachers require more guidance and clarity.

The emphasis on teacher assessments leads teachers to know their pupils really well

This was confirmed by all the pupils involved in discussion and is an aspect that is likely to have a positive long-term impact on pupils' confidence and learning.

Pupils in Year 6 have increased confidence and trust in their teachers and know they are focused on helping individuals to learn

This was also a common factor in all the discussions held with pupils and demonstrates another positive impact of stopping the reliance on SATs.

Year 6 teachers would like consistent assessment practices as a norm in all years and all schools

Teachers commented that all staff and pupils in their schools would benefit from having equally as detailed assessment practices as themselves. This would enable the transfer of pupils from class to class, and between schools, much more secure as everyone would have an accurate picture of what each child does well and hence be able to plan what they should learn next.

Year 6 teachers would like their interpretation of Level Descriptors to be identical with secondary schools

This desire was also expressed by teachers in secondary schools and is a clear indicator of a need for future development in this area.

Where teachers internalise Level Descriptors, assessment is more accurate and there is increased rigour in lessons

This has already been highlighted above.

3. Items related to the ‘whole school’

The assessment from teachers in Year 2 and Year 6 is consistent – but teachers in other years need similar assessment skills

Headteachers reported that the increase in assessment skills in Years 2 and 6 is a welcome addition to their school. However, this raises a further point that should not all teachers be using the same levels of skill? As pupils in these years are benefiting from continual assessment and lessons that are more closely matched to their learning needs, then pupils in other years should have the same benefits. The emphasis on teacher assessments is leading to a perception that assessment is a continual process and not just something that happens at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Also, the teachers in Years 2 and 6 report that they would like to receive pupils from their colleagues with accurate assessment of their skills as this would make the start of the new school year much more focused on pupils’ needs.

Assessment data is not yet being used to show pupils’ achievements, and hence not showing the effectiveness of teachers. This is a missed opportunity to demonstrate the ‘feel good factor’.

In most of the schools visited, senior managers and teachers were rarely analysing the data from teacher assessments to show the added value for pupils over their time in school and also over their time in either Year 2 or Year 6. When this exercise was carried out as part of the review, schools were able to see the value they had added to pupils over time and that an opportunity to demonstrate their success to themselves was being missed. Headteachers commented that, with consistent assessment practices in every year group, they could track the progress made by each pupil and enable more effective performance management to take place as this could be measured by the progress pupils make rather than the test results they attain.

Some schools would like to extend the range of assessment so that it includes assessing pupils learning behaviours and skills

Headteachers commented that a number of pupils make considerable gains in their personal development, attitudes to learning and self-esteem. However, academic assessment does not enable these aspects to be sufficiently recognised. Some schools are already devising measures of, for example, pupils' learning behaviours or their effort and application in lessons. Further development of such ideas, along with investigation of systems already in place in other schools, would help schools to assess more accurately the differences they make in the lives of pupils over time.

4. Items relating to secondary schools

Agreement on the timing for the exchange of assessment information would help Year 7 teachers to complete their planning in time

In the secondary school visited, staff were uncertain when the assessment information from primary schools would be made available. As a result, they were waiting to, for example, allocate pupils to class groups and sets and this was delaying their planning process.

Teachers would like to ensure that their interpretation of Level Descriptors matches that of primary schools

Year 6 teachers also expressed this wish and the review agrees that this would provide a useful step forward in raising the quality of assessment throughout Jersey.

Very good practice was evident in the secondary school visited for using assessment to track progress and demonstrate success, and also for how best to assess science at primary level

Very good use was made of an information technology system for entering the assessment data for every pupil. This is then analysed and targets set for the coming year for what each pupil should realistically achieve. This system can be analysed in any way and is capable of showing a school all it needs to know about the achievement of its pupils. In addition, staff are adapting the software so that they can record the effort and attitudes of pupils and analyse those who deserve praise for consistent effort, and those at risk of requiring additional attention to help with their behaviour in class. A senior member of staff also demonstrated that considerable thought has already been given to how best to assess science in primary schools and this work is worthy of wider consideration for use throughout Jersey.

Secondary teachers would welcome more detailed assessment than that already given

Currently, secondary schools receive the Level each pupil has attained in English, mathematics and science. Teachers expressed a preference for this to be more detailed so that, in each subject, the Level gained (and sub-level) in each strand of the subject was given. For example, in English, teachers would like to know a pupil's attainment in reading, writing, speaking and listening rather than just having an overall score for English.

5. Items related to the Department for Education

Change has been implemented thoughtfully and well

Schools and teachers are pleased with the changes that are taking place and are generally grateful for the way in which they have been consulted and involved in the process. Analysis of correspondence and files shows that the pilot study has been carefully thought through and schools have been supported effectively in making the required changes. A key feature in this is that the schools involved are willing to take part and want to see what the benefits will be of relying on teacher assessment. In addition, correspondence shows that the Department for Education is also willing to learn from what works well and what could be improved so that other schools can benefit from the pilot study.

Schools express a general pleasure with the time and funding given to help them with the process of change

Schools have been given sufficient funding to enable teachers in Years 2 and 6 to have sufficient time to carry out their assessments and also to meet with one another to ensure the consistency of their evaluations. This has helped schools very well through the initial process of learning to use Level Descriptors and has helped the change to teacher assessments to succeed.

The work of 'clusters' is patchy. There are some strengths, but not all clusters are yet supporting moderation and the sharing of good practice consistently

Whilst the theory to give autonomy to each cluster to function as it sees fit is sound, the practice reveals that clear leadership is needed so that each fulfils its functions to the full. A steer is needed from the Department for Education to ensure that this potentially very effective system is operating as it should.

Teachers require support in developing assessment procedures for science, speaking and listening and personal development

These common factors can be developed and significantly improved by identification of good practice and development of strategies already being devised and considered on Jersey. This, however, will need the backing of the Department for Education if revised and agreed strategies are to be implemented in all schools.

Suggested future developments

The opportunity exists for the States of Jersey to continue to develop assessment practices and procedures that will not only replace the need for SATs, but also provide a higher quality of assessment that will promote higher quality teaching and learning. The continuation of initiatives such as ‘assessment for learning’ and ‘critical skills’ together with continued developments in assessment are likely to be successful in raising achievement for pupils in Jersey.

The following suggestions have arisen from the evidence considered in compiling this review.

- A clear lead should be given to cluster groups so that:
 - Teacher assessments are moderated effectively in all subjects
 - Clusters are consistent between one another in their moderation
 - Best practice in assessment procedures is shared
 - Teachers are led to internalise level descriptors
 - There continues to be a mechanism for the validation of teacher assessments at Key Stages 1 and 2

- Further develop the co-operation between schools so that:
 - Working parties are established, with experienced personnel, to develop relevant and appropriate assessment tools for science and speaking and listening skills
 - All primary and secondary schools are interpreting level descriptors consistently
 - Best practice is shared in the assessment of pupils’ personal development, learning behaviours and attitudes to learning so that assessment shows the benefits gained for the ‘whole child’

- Enable schools to make the best use of their own assessment so that:
 - All teachers in all year groups are assessing pupils’ achievements as accurately as the teachers in Year 2 and Year 6.
 - All teachers carry out assessment as a routine part of their job, with the difference in Years 2 and 6 being that these are the times chosen for reporting to the Department for Education
 - Funding and time is given to each school to be used for ‘assessment practice and procedures’ in all year groups, instead of just Year 2 and Year 6
 - All pupils are taking part in their own assessment and benefiting from activities in lessons that are accurately matched to their learning needs
 - Teachers rely increasingly on their professional judgement, with moderation by colleagues, rather than continuing to cross reference their assessments with unwieldy procedures and a battery of standardised tests
 - Schools collect and analyse data from assessment so that it shows: the school how well each pupil is doing; teachers how well each pupil in their class is doing; the areas of school performance that are to be celebrated and improved; how well pupils are being challenged and/or supported in their learning

- Ensure that assessment continues to be rigorous, that teachers sustain high expectations and that the accuracy of teacher assessments continues to be validated.

Additional reflections on ‘accountability’

Should all schools be carrying out accurate assessment as routine then there is the potential for the added value for each pupil to be calculated. Compilation of these results may give the opportunity for each school to produce an overview of their effectiveness, for example, as follows:

Year 2

When compared against their attainment on entry, 90 per cent of our pupils have made at least the progress expected of them. 70 per cent of our pupils have made more progress than expected. 10 per cent of our pupils have special educational needs and, whilst their progress has been slower than the other pupils, it represents a considerable achievement for the pupils concerned.

Year 6

When compared against their attainment at the end of Year 2, 85 per cent of our pupils have made at least the progress expected of them. 75 per cent of our pupils exceeded their targets and have made more progress than expected.

This is a shift from using test/assessment results as a means of measuring effectiveness that brings the focus onto how well pupils have done, rather than just measuring their attainment. It may be possible to use measures such as these to inform politicians and education officers of the effectiveness of Jersey’s schools.

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