School Context

Corpus Christi is a denominational primary school situated in the Knightswood area of Glasgow. The school teaches approximately 400 pupils, from primary 1 – primary 7, arranged into 14 classes. Last year there were 60 children in primary 1. Around 30% of the school’s pupils have English as an additional language (EAL).

Before the assessment

How did you decide the right time to administer the SNSAs?

For the first year of the implementation of the Scottish National Standardised Assessments, we decided to assess pupils within a two week period in April. As the local authority did not set a specific assessment window for the administration of the assessments, the timing was a decision we took ourselves as a school. It was decided to carry them out in April simply because there was more time available then as opposed to later in the session when so much of the curriculum is taken up with end of year activities. We were fully aware that the children would still be making progress at this time of year, but wanted to gain an honest account of where they were in their learning so as to help inform teachers’ professional judgement when deciding later in the session whether a primary 1 learner had achieved early level in literacy or numeracy.

How did you plan for the assessments?

In collaboration with primary 1 teachers, the school management team planned the administration of the assessments as part of an enhanced school assessment model. At other stages (primary 4 and primary 7), the assessments were planned for by teachers in the same way as for any other formative assessment designed to provide evidence on where pupils are in their learning journey.

How did you prepare pupils for the SNSAs?

Given that our approach was to present the assessments as a normal part of day-to-day learning, we did not feel the need to prepare the children in any particular way other than discussing the assessments prior to carrying them out and taking them through the practice assessments. In doing so, we described them as just another learning activity and avoided referring to them as anything other than that.

We also wanted to be as inclusive as possible in our approach and so took the decision to allow every child the opportunity to experience the process of sitting the assessments, regardless of any additional support needs. Saying that, for particular children, we halted an assessment if we thought it appropriate to do so. Furthermore, as we felt it important to be led by the needs of the child, we did not always insist on an assessment being completed in one sitting. For a small number of primary 1
pupils, this meant having a short break before resuming a literacy or numeracy assessment.

For example, pupils with significant additional support needs were still given the opportunity to sit both the literacy and numeracy assessments. However, in doing so particular emphasis was put on the idea of them as a game. This meant that they were happy to try every question and were provided with opportunities to take a break and resume later, if required. Again, it was felt that such an approach was consistent with the school’s approach to inclusion.

Regardless of how a child performed, we felt that the diagnostic information the assessments provided proved useful in informing teachers' judgement of progress when considered alongside other assessment evidence taken from day-to-day learning. This included EAL pupils, as we thought the experience of attempting the assessments would be of value to both them and their teacher.

**Were there any other preparations you had to make?**

The assessments were carried out on classroom computers, with each pupil taking a turn. Using headphones meant that pupils could concentrate on completing an assessment undisturbed while normal classroom activities were taking place. Consequently, there was no need to rearrange classrooms.

One of our depute headteachers took responsibility for administering the assessments across the school and this was important in coordinating the process and keeping track of which and how many pupils had completed the assessments at any given time. It also had the advantage of ensuring a consistent approach to their administration across the whole school.

Specifically, the depute headteacher supported each primary 1 pupil through the literacy and numeracy assessments to ensure that they fully understood how to go about completing them and was on hand to resolve any issues. This also had the advantage of allowing the class teacher to focus on other planned learning and teaching while the assessments were taking place.

**Did you need support to figure out the system?**

Both depute headteachers and a few members of staff attended the training sessions provided by SCHOLAR and, on their return, cascaded this training to colleagues. This definitely helped to make sure that the assessments were carried out in an efficient manner. Importantly, it also helped them to understand the diagnostic and formative nature of the assessments. We didn’t encounter any technical problems and found the system straightforward to use.

**During the assessments**

**How did the children respond to the process?**

Generally, the children enjoy using technology and therefore regarded the online aspect of the assessments positively. However, most primary 1 pupils have more
experience of using a tablet at home, rather than a desktop. Consequently, some struggled with the manipulation of the mouse and needed support with this.

**What were the challenges and how did you overcome them?**

As mentioned, the only real challenge with primary 1 pupils was overcoming a lack of experience of using a computer keyboard and manipulating a mouse. For example, during the practice assessments some tried to swipe the screen when answering certain questions. This meant that the supervising teacher had to demonstrate how to use the mouse. The best way to do this was to physically place her hand over the child’s hand in order to demonstrate how to move and click on the mouse. It did not take long for the children to learn what to do and the supervising teacher was on hand to offer any further assistance, when required.

It is anticipated that, this session, the school will be able to utilise tablets with all primary 1 pupils, which should mitigate this problem.

Some of our EAL children struggled with the wording of certain numeracy questions. However, we overcame this by providing the same support as would be the case in any other learning experience.

**On average, how long did the assessments take?**

The time taken to complete an assessment depended on the individual child and how we felt they were coping. On average, assessments took around 30 minutes to complete.

**After the assessments**

**Is there anything you would do differently?**

As part of the Glasgow City Council digital strategy, this year the school will be provided with a bank of tablets. These will undoubtedly prove very useful when administering the Scottish National Standardised Assessments across the school, and with primary 1 in particular. Apart from that we were happy with the way the assessments were carried out and will look to replicate the same approach this year.

**What did you conclude about the children’s learning from the assessments?**

For us, the SNSAs verified the information we already had on learners’ progress. Consequently, they gave us confidence in our monitoring and tracking processes across the school, which were shown to be robust. The assessments also proved useful in identifying areas of literacy and numeracy that, in certain classes, had not been learned in enough depth. Consequently, we were able to focus on these areas during the summer term. An analysis of individual learner feedback also provided next steps in learning for specific children.

Overall, diagnostic feedback was mostly consistent with teacher expectations/professional judgement. Inevitably, there were a few ‘outliers’ – those
children who did better or less well than expected. In such cases, this prompted further reflection and discussion on the progress of these individuals.

**How will this help you to support learning further?**

It certainly gave teachers more confidence when discussing children’s progress. With regards to the standardised assessments supporting learning, we will use them as part of the range of assessment evidence generated from ongoing learning and teaching, to track pupils’ progress and plan next steps in learning.

**What advice would you give on the administration of the assessments?**

To regard the assessments as another tool to help track children’s learning. Also, in the unlikely chance of a child struggling or getting distressed, then don’t continue with the assessment. Essentially, our primary 1 pupils did not know they were undertaking an assessment as we never put a huge emphasis on them. For us, they were very much regarded as intended - ‘low-stakes’ and diagnostic.

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<tr>
<th><strong>Education Scotland comment on any issues raised within this case study:</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>• The issue of scrolling using a mouse within the P1 assessments is considered as part of the Education Scotland quality assurance process. While this cannot be removed completely, each question is reviewed on an individual basis to limit how much scrolling is necessary.</td>
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