

Local Authority	<i>South Ayrshire Council</i>
School	<i>Tarbolton Primary School</i>
Headteacher	<i>Jacqueline Blair</i>

School Context

Tarbolton Community Campus is comprised of both a primary school and nursery. The campus, which serves the village of Tarbolton and surrounding rural areas, teaches approximately 200 pupils. Last year there were 2 classes in primary 1. The campus, which opened in 2017, also provides a number of services to the community, such as a local library.

Before the assessments

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

Like many other local authorities, in the first year of the roll out of the Scottish National Standardised Assessments, the local authority applied an assessment 'window' which determined when the assessments were to be administered in its schools. This meant that they were carried out with our primary 1, primary 4 and primary 7 pupils during a four week period across May and June. However, this session, the local authority has indicated that the assessments should be administered at a time to be determined by schools themselves. In Tarbolton Primary, this means that they will be carried out over a longer timeframe, at a point in the year that is most appropriate for each child. As with last year, the assessments will be regarded as part of children's everyday learning and teaching experience.

How did you plan for the assessments?

As had been normal practice with previous commercial standardised assessments carried out at two discrete points in the year, last session parents and carers were notified of the SNSAs through the school newsletter. For any parents or carers wishing to find out more information, a hyperlink to the Scottish National Standardised Assessment website was included. For staff, the assessments were planned for within the context of the school's assessment and moderation calendar and, this session, will be fully integrated into the whole school assessment policy.

How did you prepare pupils for the SNSAs?

Primary 1 children were not formally prepared for the assessments as it was important that they regarded them as a normal part of everyday learning and teaching. Again, this was very much the same approach taken with previous standardised assessments carried out in the school. In talking to pupils about the assessments beforehand, and particularly with primary 1, we ensured that pupils had the opportunity to discuss the process openly, using the language they were already familiar with from regular opportunities to talk about the ongoing assessment of their learning. This approach ensured pupils did not regard the assessments as anything out of the ordinary. The children also had the opportunity to familiarise themselves

with the process through the practice questions prior to the assessments starting; something we found very useful in helping them prepare.

A slightly modified approach was taken for any children with additional support needs to ensure they were able to access the process to the same extent as their classmates. For example, children who needed to be encouraged to take plenty of time to consider a question before responding were given a 'magic wand' with which to point at the answer they believed to be correct. The teacher then clicked the mouse accordingly. This approach really motivated children to focus on doing their best. Pleasingly, they became very enthusiastic about the assessments, for example, by asking if they were going to see the animated online helper that day.

As a dyslexia friendly school, we worked hard to assist learners with dyslexia, at all stages, to access the assessments by providing them with the same level of support we would hope to provide for any other activity.

Were there any other preparations you had to make?

As well as two computers in the classroom itself, all classes have access to computers in the open area outside their classroom. Primary 1 children regularly use these computers in a range of learning and teaching activities. During the SNSA assessment window in May and June, priority was given to primary 1, primary 4 and primary 7 classes completing the assessments on these computers. Teachers across the school were able to accommodate this without any great disruption to their learning plans.

Did you need support to figure out the system?

Along with other local authority schools, staff participated in training from SCHOLAR, which provided the support required to operate the system confidently. We found that the Twig Helpdesk also proved useful as, on the one occasion we needed to phone it, our enquiry was answered in a knowledgeable and efficient manner.

During the assessments

How did the children respond to the process?

On the whole, all pupils, including those in primary 1, responded well to the assessments. This was partially due to the fact that they were already familiar and comfortable with working on the school computers. We also feel that the children's positive response to the assessments was due to the teacher knowing each individual child in her class very well. This knowledge allowed the teacher to support each child in a way they would find appropriately engaging.

What were the challenges and how did you overcome them?

On average, in Tarbolton Primary, the literacy assessments took between 30 and 40 minutes per pupil to complete, with the numeracy assessments taking roughly 25 minutes. The children were not fazed by the length of time taken, as it included allowing time for them to engage with particular questions by sharing with the

teacher the experiences or prior learning a question reminded them of. When this happened, the challenge for the teacher was to gently draw the child back to the actual assessment in order to focus on answering a question.

After the assessments

Is there anything you would do differently?

As mentioned, given the revised local authority guidance this session, the assessments will be out carried when the teacher feels it is the most appropriate time for each child and when the administration of the assessment will yield well-timed, formative feedback on progress in literacy and numeracy.

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

Last session, we found that diagnostic feedback from the SNSAs allowed the primary 1 teacher to determine the progress of each pupil in her class against that of their peers, and the year group as a whole. This information helped to 'triangulate' the teacher's professional judgement on children's progress. As the diagnostic data provided, largely matched progress observed from day-to-day assessment evidence, in general terms, it boosted staff's confidence in their own professional judgement.

How will this help you to support learning further?

As part of last session's school improvement plan, there was a focus on the development of non-fiction reading. Given that some of the questions in the literacy assessment were based on non-fiction texts, for us, this will mean having a continued focus on ensuring that pupils at all stages are given opportunities to access a range of both fiction and non-fiction texts throughout the year.

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

In light of our experience of the first year of the Scottish National Standardised Assessments, the main piece of advice we would give is to ensure that primary 1 pupils are 'PC ready' i.e. that they have had the chance to practise working on a computer screen and manipulating a mouse. For example, ensuring that pupils have had opportunities to experience the early level technologies Experiences and Outcomes, and have met the corresponding Benchmarks will help primary 1 children to engage with the practicalities of the assessments.

An effective primary 1 curriculum, even when play-based in its methodology, still involves planning with Experiences and Outcomes and evaluating pupils' progress against the Benchmarks. Consequently, it is possible to manage the administration of the SNSAs with primary 1 learners in a way that is compatible with the principles of a well-planned approach to play-based learning. It is possible to adopt a similarly positive and engaging play-based methodology to their use.

Education Scotland comment on any issues raised within this case study:

- *Meeting learners' needs (Dyslexia) – if appropriate, screen colouring and resolutions can be changed on computer screens to help meet the needs of dyslexic learners. Detailed guidance on this can be found in the help section on Accessibility on SNSA web page.*