

Local Authority	<i>West Lothian Council</i>
School	<i>Peel Primary School</i>
Headteacher	<i>Iain McDermott</i>

School Context

Peel Primary School is an urban school set in Livingston. It has 400 pupils and is well supported by its parents and carers. There were 3 primary 1 classes in session 2017-18, comprising of 56 children, all of whom sat the Scottish National Standardised Assessments. The headteacher and leadership team know the school and its children well and have supported the administration of the assessments throughout.

Before the assessment

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

The school carried out the assessments at a time that was right for the pupils within their identified quality improvement calendar, as recommended by both national and locally agreed guidance.

The local authority has a history of using other standardised assessments, so the practice was not new to the school and a culture already existed to support this.

The primary 1 assessments were completed in May, allowing routines to be established for the children in a flexible, play-based curriculum. It was very much felt that the Scottish National Standardised Assessments formed part of the day-to-day learning experience and, as such, did not require any additional planning beyond that of a normal lesson.

How did you plan for the assessments?

As per the website template, information was sent to parents/carers with the offer of the Scottish National Standardised Assessment Parent Guide, although this was not requested by any parents. The assessments were planned for within the school quality improvement calendar. The SNSAs were seen as one of the activities that children were involved in throughout the course of their learning and was planned for by the teacher in a similar way to any other learning experience.

How did you prepare pupils for the SNSAs?

The primary 1 SNSAs were one of a number of activities children were involved in at the same time. There was a work station of touchscreen computers that groups of children (around 4 or 5) used, while the rest of the class were working on other activities at different workstations.

Primary 1 teachers coordinated the use of the technology and built this into their teaching timetable. Children saw the activity as 'just another game/activity' that they

were doing that day. They were very familiar with the process. Similar to all activities within the class, those who required additional support worked with a pupil support assistant, which meant the questions could be read and the child could point to their answer on the screen.

Were there any other preparations you had to make?

There were no arrangements beyond the usual organisation of workstations. The class teacher made sure that computers were logged on, or that the children had support to do so.

The communication between the three primary 1 teachers meant that technological resources were available when required.

Children were not withdrawn from the class to complete the assessment, so the experience looked and felt the same as every other activity they were involved in. It was not a daunting experience for any of the children.

Did you need support to figure out the system?

No support was required to use the system, but staff were aware that support was available if required. The headteacher and depute headteacher supported staff through the initial training process.

During the assessments

How did the children respond to the process?

The process was a very normal learning experience for the primary 1 cohort. Nothing stood out to them as being different, so they engaged with it well and many seemed to enjoy the process.

As with every learning opportunity within a class, the teachers were a supportive and motivating force for the children, inspiring confidence in their ability and encouraging them to 'show what they could do'.

It was very useful for class teachers to see the children complete the assessments, showing where they felt most confident and how they coped as the assessment adapted and progressed.

What were the challenges and how did you overcome them?

Peel Primary saw this experience as being a really positive one. Staff did feel that it would be useful to be able to stop and start the assessment, which was felt to take a long time for some of the children.

On average, how long did the assessments take?

The numeracy assessment took around 30 to 40 minutes to complete, while the literacy assessment was closer to an hour. Most children coped well with the

duration of assessments, but an hour was thought to be quite long for those few children who needed support to complete an assessment.

After the assessments

Is there anything you would do differently?

In the year ahead, the organisation of the Scottish National Standardised Assessments will run similarly to last year, but certain aspects will change every year in response to the needs of the children involved. It was a very smooth process last year and so it is not anticipated that the approach taken to the implementation of the assessments will change much.

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

The data from the SNSAs has reflected teacher professional judgement accurately. This has been very reassuring and has instilled confidence in staff. For example, almost all primary 1 pupils recorded results in literacy, which compared favourably to teacher judgement of progress based on their own observations of learning.

The data has also helped to identify learning needs for each child and has made it very easy to create groupings of children who require support in a particular area, thereby allowing a more personalised approach to learning and teaching.

An analysis of the diagnostic feedback has allowed interventions to be introduced early and for these to be reviewed to show the impact of addressing the needs of the child. This means that issues in learning do not go unnoticed and develop into a major area of difficulty for a child. This was not the same with previous assessment types, as it was not possible to see how a child had responded to individual questions.

The data has made tracking and monitoring and professional dialogue much richer, with subsequent interventions being much more effective and tangible.

As a cluster, staff have worked together to identify those areas where pupils performed less well than expected and have worked together to improve learning and teaching in these areas. In primary 7, this information has been passed on to the secondary school as a guide to what needs to be worked on; thereby improving transition and the sharing of information.

Overall, the whole process has helped to identify children's needs – not just those who are not 'on track'. Consequently, the Scottish National Standardised Assessments are helping to improve learning and teaching through the analysis and discussion of the diagnostic information they produce.

What is the one piece of advice that you would give another school that is about to administer the assessments for the first time?

The SNSAs are about meeting the needs of learners and should be managed and supported like any other learning experience.

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

- *Stop/Start – the assessments can be stopped at any time and will be saved at that point. The child can then return to the assessments and start from where they left off. This allows teachers to plan breaks for children if that support their needs. It avoids children sitting for too long at an assessment and is a safety net for technical problems. Evidence shows that most children complete an assessment in one sitting.*