

A CASE STUDY

Assessment Beyond Levels : CEM Primary assessments Aims and Benefits

Measure attainment and track progress

At primary level, Aspects, PIPS and InCAS assessments provide an objective baseline measure which is invaluable to tracking progress at individual and cohort level. In the absence of levels, they provide an objective, external evaluation and standardisation against national norms or age equivalent scores and, alongside school internal assessment data, assist with year-on-year tracking of progress. Information from on-entry assessments helps with pupil profiling by establishing an initial ability baseline which can be used to inform future teaching and learning, and inform school curriculum planning.

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The detailed data obtained over time allows teachers to identify pupils' gaps in learning, monitor individual progress and can be used to inform future planning and teaching. At whole school level, the data not only provides robust evidence of progress that can be used for accountability purposes, but can also support monitoring of teaching and learning at cohort level; inform curriculum planning and evaluation; identify staff professional development needs and support school improvement.

Target-setting

As PIPS and InCAS data identify gaps in learning, this can help with individual target-setting for improvement and mapping pupil progress. Easy access to detailed analysis of performance at cohort level, for example class, year group, subject area, can also support school leaders with identifying targets for particular cohorts as well as monitoring and evaluating earlier interventions or particular targets. The predictive nature of the assessments assists with curriculum planning and target-setting for whole cohorts against school expectations or national accountability measures (floor standards).

Helping parents understand their child's attainment and progress

PIPS and InCAS data provide a wealth of information that can support school assessment data in reporting attainment and progress to parents. Within the changing school landscape, parents need simple and accurate information about their children learning in an easy to understand format. CEM reports identify where children are with their learning against their own prior achievement and/or national standards in a visual format, and parental feedback suggests

that parents find PIPS data to be a particularly useful tool in reporting of progress. InCAS data show progress based on age standardized scores so parents can see how pupils' abilities relate to their chronological age. Where there is an indication of a weakness, parents always welcome early identification. In instances of high achievement, CEM data can be used to report on appropriate level of challenge.

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Providing evidence

Alongside school assessment data, CEM assessments provide an extra layer of external, robust evidence of pupil progress and attainment. As inspections are focused on the impact of school processes, the ability to demonstrate how a school's assessment framework contributes to improved outcomes for pupils is crucial to evaluating the effectiveness of teaching and learning,

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and pupil achievement. In the absence of levels, the data from CEM assessments can be used to support teacher assessment data as evidence of progress at individual and cohort level. The information from baseline assessments, can be used to establish pupils' ability on entry as compared with national norms.

CEM assessment data are a source of reliable, standardised information for inspectors and allow school leaders to demonstrate how the data are used for school self-evaluation and improvement. As new floor standards are quite ambitious, effective assessment frameworks based on formative strategies for improving learning together with the evidence of progress measured by reliable summative standardised assessments, like CEM primary age assessments, are key to informing future teaching and monitoring its effectiveness.

Standardisation and national benchmarking

Comparisons with national norms allow teachers to put school assessment data into context and assist with benchmarking of pupils performance, which is particularly useful when schools work in greater isolation and need to demonstrate progress between standardised key stage assessments. CEM assessments are in tune with the new way of assessing progress and attainment in the new curriculum, where the new assessments at the end of key stage 2 will report "secondary readiness" by way of national standardisation (by comparison with others). According to new accountability measures, schools will be expected to get at least 85% of their pupils to the new "secondary ready" standard (similar to a current Level 4B), which will be reported on a standardised national scale of 80 – 130 with a scaled score of 100 being described as "secondary ready" or the "expected standard". The new floor standards will be based on key stage 2 results and pupil progress, and schools will be expected to track the rate of progress from a new baseline assessment in Reception.

CEM assessments are in tune with the new way of assessing progress and attainment in the new curriculum. As CEM assessments already provide similar baseline data and can be used for tracking progress throughout primary years based on national standardisation and evidence of individual attainment/progress, together with local school data based on teacher assessment, they can provide robust evidence of progress benchmarked against national standards. (For comparison purposes, PIPS assessment feedback is standardised with an average pupil scoring 50.)

CEM data are ideally placed to contribute to a broad range of information that can be made available to parents and the wider public about the school performance and contribute to the fair and transparent school accountability system.

Screening for learning needs

The diagnostic nature of CEM assessments provides data for early identification of special education or EAL needs that can be a barrier to learning. On the other end of the spectrum, early identification of pupils who are particularly able, Gifted & Talented, can assist with curriculum planning and inform teaching and learning to a greater degree. Early identification of specific learning needs is crucial to providing intervention at an appropriate level. The data from subsequent assessments can be used to evaluate school intervention. Diagnostic assessment in InCAS Reading and Maths are also supported by research-based remediation advice to empower teachers in the diagnosis of specific learning difficulties and providing the right level of support.

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Giving pupils a voice

As pupil engagement in learning is key to motivation and improvement, CEM assessments, through measuring attitudes, can provide valuable information for teachers and school leaders regarding pupils' attitudes to learning. At primary stage, attitudes to mathematics, reading and school are assessed. These data can help with identifying mindsets towards learning in different areas of the school curriculum and can help with bridging pastoral and academic dimensions of the school. The data can also be used for mentoring learning and developing cross-curricular thinking and study skills to improve pupils' attitudes towards learning. This information is an invaluable addition to academic and pastoral profiling, and can contribute significantly to reporting and discussions with parents.

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Dr Joanna Goodman

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