

Assessment Update – Autumn 2015

This update summarises the conclusions of different assessment groups in Sheffield over recent months. This has included the STAT Steering group, but is not exclusively related to STAT Sheffield. The groups have considered age related expectations, which children are on track to reach national expectations, national tests, what constitutes good or better progress, whether children's learning should ever be taken from the curriculum of a different year group than their own & setting targets for the end of the year.

This document summarises this thinking through a series of frequently asked questions. This document is accompanied by three appendices, which have been provided by different schools. The documents have been used by the schools to support target setting or pupil progress meetings so far this term.

We will be organising a series of sessions over the next few weeks for Sheffield schools who are due inspection, to support their preparation in relation to assessment and data. There will also be an open workshop next half term to share the key learning from these sessions and provide a forum for discussion of these issues.

Frequently Asked Questions:

- **What constitutes age related expectation for pupils at the end of the year using the STAT Sheffield scale?**
- **Do children need to be secure in their year group by the end of the year?**

After a year of tracking outcomes in the new curriculum we are now able to refine our understanding of what constitutes age related expectation. In relation to the STAT scale, the STAT steering group now recommend using 'developing' at the end of the year (e.g. the child can do more than half of the curriculum) as being 'at' age related expectation for a child in KS2. Secure at the end of the year remains age related for a child in KS1.

Schools will choose their language in relation to ARE to reflect their wider views, with children reaching the age related expectation being described as 'At ARE' or 'on track to reach' national expectations at the end of the key stage. Children who have attainment above ARE may then be described as being 'Above ARE' or 'on track to exceed' national expectations. A school which is delivering a mastery curriculum may also choose to describe children who are secure in their year group as demonstrating 'mastery' or even demonstrating 'mastery with greater depth' as described in appendix three.

In KS1 the identification of children who are 'above' is more difficult when a school is not moving on to the next curriculum (see below), as the identification of pupils who have achieved greater depth will need to be based on a wider range of outcomes (for example books).

Some schools have also given consideration to a broader definition of 'on track' (see appendix one – grid two). They consider that children who are clearly within the curriculum (e.g. in the STAT scale have reached 'entering') at the end of the year as also broadly on track to reach national expectations. They feel that this creates a useful distinction between those securely on track and those who are less secure, which improves the quality of target setting, but still reflects that these children are all on track to reach national expectations for the end of the key stage.

- **How can we identify which children are ‘on track’ to reach national expectations at the end of key stage?**
- **Which step will children need to have reached by the end of Y6 to be ‘at national standard’ when sitting the end of key stage tests?**
- **What should Y6 teachers be considering in relation to the curriculum and Y6 SATs?**

There remains a significant amount that we don’t yet know about the Y6 SATs in 2016, which makes it difficult to give a definitive answer to the question of what ‘national standard’ will translate to.

We do know, however, that the achievement of a national standard is likely to become increasingly challenging over the next few years, as the children who reach Y6 have spent an increasing proportion of their school career learning in the new curriculum. In the first year we can reasonably assume that children who are working within the Y6 curriculum are likely to be in a position to achieve the standard if this performance is replicated in the SATs test. As the years progress Y6 children may well need to be working further within the Y6 curriculum to reach the standard. It will obviously be important for school leaders to consider new information, as it becomes available, in considering these issues.

If, in STAT terms, we consider ‘Developing Y6 – Step 32’ as being age related at the end of the year we should also consider that children at lower steps may achieve ‘national standard’ if their SATs performance replicated their assessment within the curriculum. For this to happen Y6 teachers need to consider the changes to the content of the SATs tests to ensure that children have had the opportunity to develop confidence in the aspects of the curriculum that will be tested (for example arithmetic).

- **What constitutes good or better progress in the new curriculum?**
- **Should children be expected to make accelerated progress in the new curriculum?**

Progress under the current National Curriculum is fundamentally different to the APS which was used as part of the levels system. It is helpful to talk about the percentage of children who are at ARE, or who are on track to reach national expectations, when tracking attainment between two points in time (for example the beginning and end of the year).

Children whose attainment is sustained at ARE, and remain on track to reach national expectations, could be said to have made rapid progress in this more challenging curriculum. Similarly, children who make significant catch up towards ARE (or even move from ARE to above ARE) could also be described as rapid progress.

It is difficult to translate this to a prescribed number of STAT steps that would be expected for all children. Schools therefore need to carefully consider how STAT steps progress is articulated. A school may decide that, for example, three steps in a year is ‘typical progress’ but this heavily depends on the starting point of individual children. In this scenario, it doesn’t then mean that good or better progress necessarily means more steps, in the way that it would have previously. This also relates to the view that the school takes about children moving beyond their year group (see below) and their belief about which children should be expected to make accelerated progress.

If a school takes the view that children should not move beyond their own year group curriculum then this removes the possibility of children who are already above ARE making accelerated numerical progress. In this case the assurance that these children are being challenged appropriately would come through book scrutiny and other activities that enable the school to judge the depth of the learning, and not through numerical progress data.

In the new curriculum there is a strong logic to the view that accelerated progress should be targeted to children who need to make such progress in order to reach age related expectation, or be more securely on track to reach national expectations.

- **Should children’s learning ever be taken from a year group above their own?**
- **What should happen when children are not able to access the grid for their own year group?**

These are decisions that each school needs to make and the STAT materials have been designed to support schools whatever they decide. That said there is an increasing consensus that, in the new curriculum, children’s learning should not be taken from the year group above their own.

There is less agreement about the approach to children who are not able to access the grid for their own year group. For high needs pupils this is more straight forward, in the sense that these children may need a more bespoke curriculum. For children who may have previously been regarded as lower attaining, perhaps with additional (SEND) needs, there are two distinct ways that this is approached.

Some schools will take the view that the child’s assessment should reflect their attainment and therefore lead directly to their next steps in learning. In this approach children will sometimes be on different grids and the learning will be focussed on this content. These schools will take the view that the data is more accurate and the progress made is better reflected.

Other schools will take the view that the great majority of children should be taught from the curriculum of their year group, with the teacher tracking back to fill in gaps so that pupils can access the curriculum (for example through pre-teach activities as well as differentiation within lessons). These schools will take the view that this approach better reflects the aspiration of the new curriculum.

- **How should schools describe the attainment of cohorts within school?**
- **How can schools set targets for pupils for the end of the year or key stage?**
- **What should schools consider when holding pupil progress meetings?**

Schools need to be able to have an understanding of where children are in relation to the assessment scale, so that they can relate this to the curriculum and judge what the next steps in learning should be, and the extent to which children are on track to achieve appropriate expectations, so that they can target intervention and provision most effectively. The appendices have all been shared by schools and school leaders. They reflect the different approaches to these challenges and provide insight into the different ways people have tackled target setting and pupil progress meeting preparation.

In terms of target setting schools need to make a decision about what they consider to be age related (e.g. do they agree that in KS2 this should be ‘developing’ rather than secure?) and what their approach is to moving beyond the year group (e.g. do they agree that they shouldn’t?). Once these decisions have been made the school can determine what constitutes below-at-above in each year group for the end of the year and then track back to identify what this would equate to at the current point in the year. Appendix one is designed to enable the school to configure its expectations in this way. Accelerated progress is then targeted for pupils who, if they make four steps rather than three, will close the gap to the expectations and increase the number of pupils who are on track to meet or exceed national expectations at the end of the key stage.

In terms of pupil progress meetings it is important that this target setting is accompanied by a more detailed analysis of vulnerable pupils and groups of pupils, to ensure that intervention and support is most effectively targeted. Appendix two is more reflective of this kind of preparation.

Appendices:

- *Appendix One – School Data Review Template (ARE & Target Setting)*
- *Appendix Two – Pupil Progress Meeting Preparation (KS2 example)*
- *Appendix Three – Mastery & STAT: St Thomas of Canterbury Interpretation*