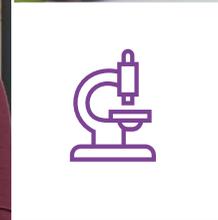
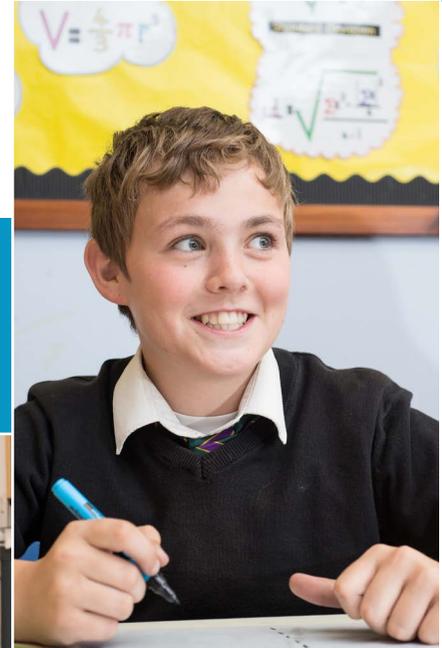
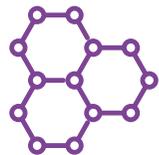
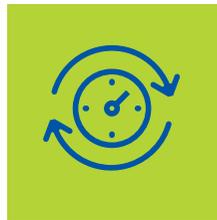


Assessment within the broad general education: a thematic inspection

Signposts to highly-effective practice



Foreword



It is essential that we use our knowledge of successful practice gathered by HM Inspectors from observing learning at first hand to help practitioners across the country improve their own practice. In doing so, we can support and promote further improvement in Scottish education.

This report takes a closer look at the effective use of assessment within broad general education. It explores some of the important factors which are making a significant difference to the way practitioners use assessment to improve children's and young people's learning and outcomes. At the Curriculum and Assessment Board last year we discussed a variety of challenges in achieving the original aims for assessment that were set out for Curriculum for Excellence within Building the Curriculum 3. We discussed the importance of assessment being viewed as an integral part of learning and teaching.

Evidence from early learning and childcare and schools inspections tells us that, nationally, there is a need to continue to improve how assessment approaches are used to inform the planning of learning and teaching. Our inspection teams found that too often planned learning is not differentiated well enough to meet the learning needs of all children.

Meeting the learning needs of children is key if we are going to achieve the national vision of excellence and equity. Therefore, practitioners need to know

where children and young people are currently in their learning. It is crucial that this information is used to identify and plan their next steps in learning. So, we need to continue to improve the reliability and validity of teachers' judgements of children's and young people's progress and achievement across all curriculum areas in the broad general education.

"Assessment within the broad general education" offers examples of strong practice already taking place across Scotland's early learning and childcare settings and schools which can be built on. The case studies contained within this report exemplify strong practice taking place in schools and early learning and childcare settings across Scotland. We have also described features of highly-effective practice evident in those establishments having a positive impact on children's and young people's learning and progress. We intend that by sharing this work and key features that we can support practitioners to improve their own practice.

I hope this report will make an important contribution to our collective understanding of what works well to enable settings and schools address effectively the challenges associated with making best use of assessment within the broad general education.



Gayle Gorman
HM Chief Inspector of
Education

March 2020

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Introduction

This publication forms part of our national thematic inspection reports. Through our national thematic reports HM Inspectors of Education share their professional view on particular aspects of education.

This report focuses on sharing the key features which, when taken together, make the greatest difference to using assessment effectively to improve learning and teaching and in turn, outcomes for children and young people.

This report is based on evidence relating to the use of assessment within the broad general education from 252 school inspections, and 163 early learning and childcare¹ inspections, carried out during the 2018-19 academic year. It also draws on visits to primary and secondary schools and early learning and childcare settings during November and December 2019.

As well as sharing our key messages about current practice in the use of assessment within broad general education, it includes case studies of settings and establishments which demonstrate highly-effective practice.

The aim of this report is to share more widely what is working in establishments across Scotland; stimulate professional reflection and dialogue about assessment approaches and how these are used to inform improvements in learning and teaching; and help secure improved outcomes for children and young people.

1. Evidence from early learning and childcare inspections includes primary school nursery classes and standalone settings.

Background

Building the Curriculum 5: A framework for assessment provides an outline of approaches to assessment to support the purposes of learning within Curriculum for Excellence. It calls for a better understanding of assessment practice, the sharing of standards and more consistent approaches to using assessment to support learning. It also highlights a need for more autonomy and professional responsibility for teachers and practitioners.

“Assessment of children’s progress is one of the key drivers within the National Improvement Framework which highlights that ‘we all need more robust and consistent evidence which will help us in improving health and wellbeing, raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap.’”

National Improvement Framework and
Improvement Plan: 2020

Effective use of assessment by staff and learners is an integral part of learning and teaching which ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. Assessment approaches which allow learners to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding, skills, attributes and capabilities in different contexts, are key to our understanding of the progress learners are making.



Key features of highly-effective practice

HM Inspectors have identified the following features which are present in schools and settings where approaches to assessment are highly effective and lead to better outcomes for children and young people. These features do not constitute a checklist and these are not mutually exclusive. Where practice is strongest, these articulate well with each other, creating the conditions for high-quality assessment of learning:



1 Strong leadership and direction in the use of assessment. Senior leaders have a clear strategy for promoting assessment as an integral part of learning and teaching.

3 A range of well-considered and carefully planned approaches to moderation, including those using the National Benchmarks within and across schools, supports staff to make confident and accurate judgements. This also increases the reliability of assessment data and is leading to improved outcomes for learners.

5 Skilled analysis and interpretation of high-quality assessment data supports robust tracking and monitoring of learners' progress. It ensures that next steps in learning for individuals and groups of learners are identified accurately.

2 A range of assessment data is used very effectively to identify learners' needs and plan learning across the school, specifically for targeted groups of learners.

4 High-quality professional learning which builds teachers' and practitioners' confidence and increases their skills in accurate assessment of learners' progress.

6 Children and young people are fully involved in the assessment of learning. High-quality feedback and learning conversations ensure that children and young people have sound knowledge of themselves as learners. They understand what is expected of them, their strengths and the areas where they need to improve.



Key feature of highly-effective practice

1

Strong leadership and direction in the use of assessment. Senior leaders have a clear strategy for promoting assessment as an integral part of learning and teaching.



Summary of inspection findings

Senior leaders across primary and secondary schools and early learning and childcare settings are increasingly creating an appropriate climate for staff to develop further their understanding of how assessment is an integral part of learning and teaching. There is a greater emphasis on protecting time for professional learning and moderation activities throughout the year. This supports staff to have regular opportunities to review the impact of their approaches to assessment. Senior leaders are also aware that arrangements for assessment need to be manageable, and that staff should have a shared understanding of the purpose of assessment and their own responsibilities for the effective use of assessment.

In those schools and early learning and childcare settings which are having most success in raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap, effective leadership at all levels is helping to ensure that robust assessment processes are in place.

Where schools have developed progression frameworks, this is helping to build staff confidence in developing a shared understanding of achievement of a level. It is also supporting teachers to plan progression in learning through the broad general education and improve the quality of feedback to children and young people.

“Developing the leadership of learning and the leadership of our staff and our learners is a very strong feature of our work to support effective assessment within the broad general education.”

Headteacher



Case study

St Francis Xavier's | Primary School | Falkirk Council



» Visit hub page to see full sketchnote «

St Francis Xavier's Primary School has clarity around the expectations and inter-related nature of planning and tracking approaches in the school. As a result, consistency of planning approaches is a very strong feature. The headteacher describes mutually trusting relationships as a key element in achieving robust discussions about children's progress. This is coupled with the agreement of a shared mission to achieve the best outcomes for all children.

The headteacher has established a strong culture of improving learning and teaching. Staff have refreshed the assessment approaches across the school. As a result, children receive high-quality learning and teaching in most classes and in a significant number of lessons experience excellent teaching, which is resulting in improved attainment.

Clear, consistent guidance on assessment, planning and pedagogy has been developed and shared with all staff. Teachers plan thoroughly for assessment across all curricular areas. Assessment evidence is used to plan next steps in learning and is shared at points of transition. Assessment has been made manageable for staff due to protected time being allocated for professional discussions. This is supported by everyone having access to relevant and robust data.

The senior leadership team has regular discussions with each class teacher, focusing on children's progress and discussing the most appropriate planned interventions. The school has strong systems for monitoring and tracking progress of groups and individuals and this is used to inform the discussions.

St Francis Xavier's Primary School's approaches to assessment reflect "the real story of learning". Staff engender a 'can do' approach that is reflected in regular staff discussions that are clearly focused on children's progress. The school recognises the importance of relevant data and the place of professional judgement as being paramount. Staff are both empowered and enthused to ensure the learning and teaching is supported by strong, focused and effective approaches to assessment. This is leading to children across the school making very good progress in their learning and improving their social and emotional wellbeing.



Case study

Croftfoot | Primary School | Glasgow City Council



In Croftfoot Primary School, the senior leaders team has put very effective arrangements in place to ensure that robust assessment and moderation are integral to planning for teaching and learning. The senior leadership team reviewed assessment approaches, including the moderation cycle. They were able to identify where gaps existed and use this to develop a plan to improve approaches to assessment and moderation across the school.

The local authority quality improvement team has led professional learning sessions on the moderation cycle. Further opportunities to support their understanding of moderation were provided within school and across the learning community.

Whilst teachers were already using a range of assessment approaches, there was a need to improve consistency. A whole-school year planner was agreed and, as staff's confidence and skills grew, a wider range of assessments were utilised.

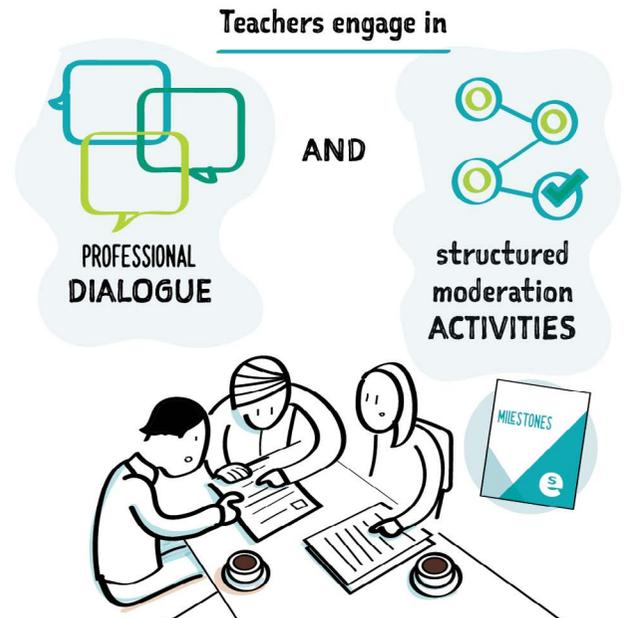
The senior leadership team plans regular professional dialogue with teachers to discuss learners' progress and identify appropriate interventions. These interventions are monitored and evaluated over time.

Overall, there is an increased understanding of the relationship between planned learning and teaching and ongoing assessment. Teachers are more skilled at using data to inform planning for learning. They participate in a growing range of moderation activities and are making increasingly robust professional judgements on how well children are progressing and their achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence level.



Case study

Haysholm | School | North Ayrshire Council



In Haysholm School, teachers have a clear, shared understanding of approaches to assessment. Assessment is integral to the planning of learning and teaching. Teachers are implementing guidance from Education Scotland's 'milestones to support learners with complex additional support needs' into their assessment practices with increasing confidence. The use of high-quality, evaluative language has increased. This is improving how staff describe children and young people's progress. Professional dialogue and participation in structured moderation activities in school is increasing the reliability of teachers' professional judgements.

As part of the school's quality assurance procedures, termly meetings between the headteacher and teachers enable learners' progress to be closely monitored. This ongoing professional dialogue enables teachers to be responsive to the needs of individual children and young people. Tracking systems have been adapted to monitor learners' engagement and the level of support they receive. This has resulted in the tracking of progress being more robust and has subsequently led to an increase in the level of challenge offered to children and young people.

'Learning journey' files include a range of assessment evidence, demonstrating progress over time. Learners' progress across the four contexts for learning is captured well in learning journeys. Planning includes very effective long-term and short-term targets. Targets are tracked rigorously throughout the session and are subject to a formal annual review. Robust gathering of assessment evidence as children enter Primary 1 provides a clear baseline against which to measure children's progress.



Key feature of highly-effective practice

2

A range of assessment data is used very effectively to identify learners' needs and plan learning across the school, specifically for targeted groups of learners.



Summary of inspection findings

Across primary and secondary schools, teachers are broadening the range of assessment evidence they gather to support their professional judgement. This includes evidence from Scottish National Standardised Assessments and class assessments. They need to build on this work to continue to improve the reliability and validity of teacher judgements of children's and young people's progress and achievement across all aspects of their learning, including all curriculum areas.

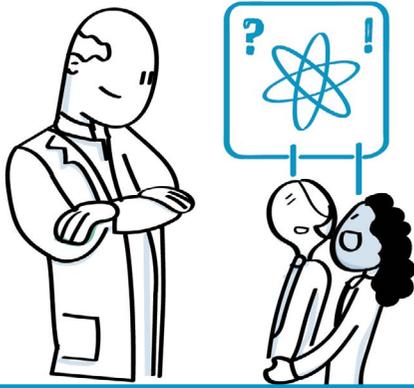
Overall, more work is required to fully embed assessment within planning for learning and teaching and, in particular, how assessment is used to inform planning and to ensure learning is well matched to the needs of all children and young people.

“Our key focus on formative assessment strategies has helped us gain insightful evidence of learning in our day-to-day lessons and this information has helped us make further improvements in pedagogy.”

Headteacher



CHILDREN ARE CONFIDENT WHEN DISCUSSING THEIR LEARNING



In Springfield Primary School, senior leaders establish clear expectations in terms of the range of assessments teachers use to support their professional judgements. This enables staff to build a clear picture of the strengths and areas for improvement for every child in the school. Senior leaders have created the 'Springfield learner'. This details the different types of assessment teachers are expected to use to support their judgements relating to children's progress and to help them engage in professional dialogue.

Teachers know the purpose of assessment. There is a shared understanding across the school that teachers will use a range of assessments including ongoing and periodic assessment, standardised assessment and self-assessment to build a clear picture of progress for all children. As a result, teachers use a wide range of formative and standardised assessments to help them determine children's progress, plan ongoing learning and teaching, and support their professional judgement.

Teachers are highly skilled in monitoring and tracking the progress of learners. This informs adaptations when planning future learning, where teachers use appropriate interventions effectively to ensure all children remain on track to make progress. This ensures almost all children make expected progress in literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics.



Case study

St Paul's | High School | Glasgow City Council



All staff have a clear vision and shared understanding of learning, teaching and assessment. As a result, staff understand the purpose of assessment. A wide range of useful approaches to assess and support the progress of learners within the broad general education is a key feature in St Paul's High School.

Assessment information is gathered from a variety of sources. This includes well-developed approaches in the use of direct observation, formative assessment strategies, quantitative data from summative assessments, pupils' self and peer-assessments and learner conversations. Staff use this information to gather a holistic view of a young person's learning and achievements.

Teachers are becoming more confident in their shared understanding of the National Benchmarks. Collaborative working with other schools in the local improvement group has improved consistency of teachers' professional judgements. During moderation activities, teachers work well collegiately to plan learning, teaching and assessment.

The use of reliable assessment data is helping teachers to identify the next steps in learning that young people should take and a holistic view of each young person's learning and achievements. Assessment evidence is used to help inform improvement in learning and teaching. It is also used to provide helpful feedback to young people. This ensures that young people are given good information to help them make improvements in their learning.

As part of the approaches to moderation, teachers enjoy sharing standards. This work is now well established with teachers' confident that their own professional judgement is improving as a result. Through effective assessment approaches, teachers make informed judgements of a young person's progress. This is captured in the school's departmental tracking, and from there, added to the whole-school tracking.



Case study

St Catherine's | Primary School | Renfrewshire Council



St Catherine's Primary School uses a whole-school assessment overview, providing an agreed timeline for undertaking assessments for summative purposes. The range of summative assessments provides the school with quantitative data to track progress across the classes, stages, groups and cohorts. The senior leadership team uses data to identify trends, areas for improvement and evidence of progress. Teachers provide narrative behind data at regular tracking meetings, then agree and plan appropriate interventions.

Additionally, teachers use formative assessment approaches to gather evidence of learners' progress. The headteacher shares key messages with teachers in relation to attainment over time. This ensures that all teachers have an understanding of areas for improvement, emerging trends and areas of strength.

ASSESSMENT IS WELL PLANNED AND USED CONSISTENTLY





Key feature of highly-effective practice

3

A range of well-considered and carefully planned approaches to moderation, including those using the National Benchmarks within and across schools, supports staff to make confident and accurate judgements. This also increases the reliability of assessment data and is leading to improved outcomes for learners.



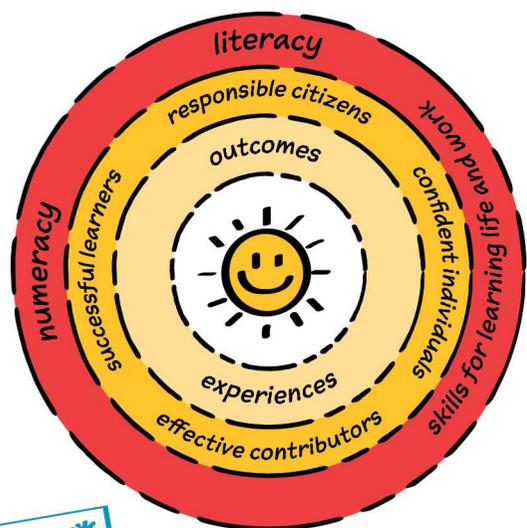
Summary of inspection findings

Staff are strengthening their assessment approaches by engaging in a range of moderation approaches within and beyond schools using the National Benchmarks. This is supporting them to create a shared understanding of national standards. In the primary sector, staff's use of National Benchmarks is better developed within the context of literacy and English, and numeracy and mathematics, but less so across the other curriculum areas. In early learning and childcare settings, moderation remains at an early stage of development for most.

Across other sectors, further work is required to ensure robust arrangements for moderation are in place across stages and across the curriculum. This should help improve the reliability and validity of teachers' judgements of children's and young people's progress and achievement across all learning.

“We pride ourselves on tracking approaches which support every teacher to have a thorough understanding of where our learners are in their learning. The culture in the school is such, that every teacher knows they have to have a clear knowledge of the level a learner is working at and can demonstrate clearly why they are assessing a learner at that level.”

Headteacher



GATHERING

COLLATING

USING

TRACKING



» Visit hub page to see full sketchnote «

In Riccarton Early Childhood Centre, effective leadership of the moderation cycle supports the team to share a sound, evidence-based understanding of children as learners. Assessment information includes a wealth of robust information including developmental milestones, practitioners' observations and evaluation of children's work. This wide range of reliable information clearly summarises the significant progress children make in different areas of their learning.

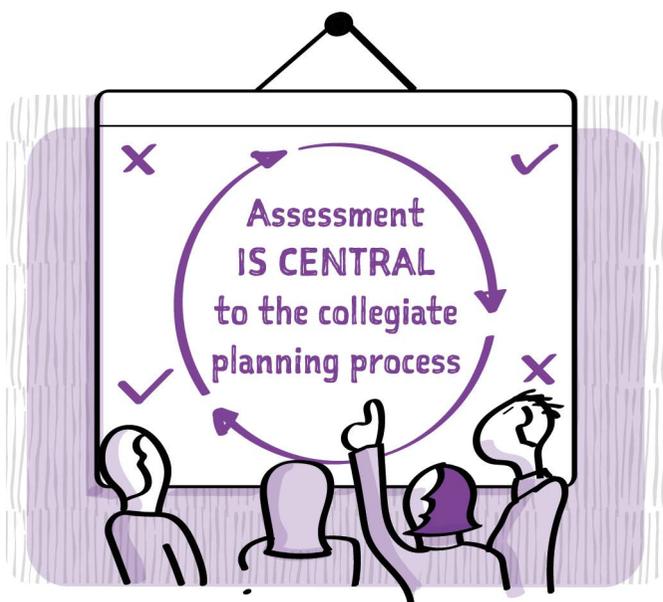
Practitioners use their comprehensive assessment data to reflect on what children have learned and plan what they need to do next. The senior leadership team carefully tracks and monitors the progress children make across the curriculum. As a result, they have a very clear overview of the progress children are making in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Practitioners use the National Benchmarks well to inform their professional judgements and monitor children's progress. This assists them to set highly-appropriate individual targets for children who are exceeding their developmental milestones.

Moderation activities, both within the setting and in partnership with other settings, enable the team to maintain consistency in their professional judgements of children's progress. Regular, individual 'pace and challenge' meetings with the headteacher enable practitioners to carefully consider the pace of learning for individuals. Together, they identify levels of support and challenge required for children and share this information with parents. Practitioners adapt and plan interactions, learning environments and interventions as a direct result of this dialogue. As a result, children make excellent progress in their learning and development.



Case study

Townhill | Primary School and Nursery Class | Fife Council



In Townhill Primary School and Nursery Class, moderation activities are used effectively to ensure that teachers have a shared understanding of children's progress through the levels of Curriculum for Excellence. Staff and senior leaders plan collaboratively in three groups: early, first and second level. Each planning session follows an agreed format and covers all curricular areas. Planning sessions lead to improved understanding of progression within and across a level, and provide a supportive context for professional dialogue. Assessment is central to the planning process and this collegiate approach is supporting consistency.

Teachers are involved in moderation activities with associated schools and beyond. The school welcomes regularly staff from other schools to share their knowledge, skills and experience in this area. Senior leaders gather relevant information about the progress of cohorts, classes, groups and individuals across each Curriculum for Excellence level during planning sessions. This is helping to ensure that all interventions to support children's progress through the broad general education are based on sound assessment evidence.

Staff make effective use of the National Benchmarks in reviewing a range of evidence of learning. This informs their professional judgements of progress and achievement. Teachers are confident in the professional judgements they make as a result of moderation built into the processes of the school, as well as opportunities to moderate with colleagues from associated schools.



**Teachers moderate
THEIR EXPECTATIONS
IN READING**



**and involve
CHILDREN IN ASSESSMENT**

Staff worked collegiately with their associated schools to undertake professional learning linked to both moderation and formative assessment. Moderation activities have helped teachers to understand the expectations of children across reading and the development of the 'learning to learn' toolkit has given the teachers clear strategies to involve children more in the assessment process. Staff have recently been using the National Benchmarks to deepen their understanding of expectations through the Curriculum for Excellence levels. They have been working with colleagues from across their associated schools to support, in particular, their shared understanding of progress in writing. All teachers have participated in a range of moderation activities, supporting them to agree on shared expectations and standards of children's progression in writing. Professional dialogue is helping to ensure that planned learning experiences are age and stage appropriate.



Key feature of highly-effective practice

4

High-quality professional learning is building teachers' and practitioners' confidence and increases their skills in assessment of learners' progress.



Summary of inspection findings

Staff's participation in career-long professional learning is having a positive impact in most schools. High-quality professional learning is increasingly supporting staff to make use of research, as well as their own professional enquiry. This is helping them to identify an appropriate range of assessment approaches and interventions, evidence success and inform improvements in classroom practice. Teachers are increasingly participating in collaborative practitioner enquiry.

This should become an integral feature of professional learning. This has the potential to complement existing assessment data and support teachers in gathering evidence of impact of changes on classroom practice linked to school improvement priorities.

Staff are increasingly engaging in collaborative approaches, with peers in and across schools, to improve the quality of learning, teaching and assessment. Through effective collaboration and participation in career-long professional learning, staff have a clearer understanding of the social, economic and cultural context of the school community. This is increasingly being used well to guide whole-school assessment approaches and inform improvement and change.

Staff in special schools would benefit from high-quality professional learning to enhance skills in assessment and moderation and raise expectations about what children and young people can achieve.

“By giving staff ownership of the success of the school, staff take responsibility for that success. This is empowerment. The success of the school is due to what happens in the classroom.”

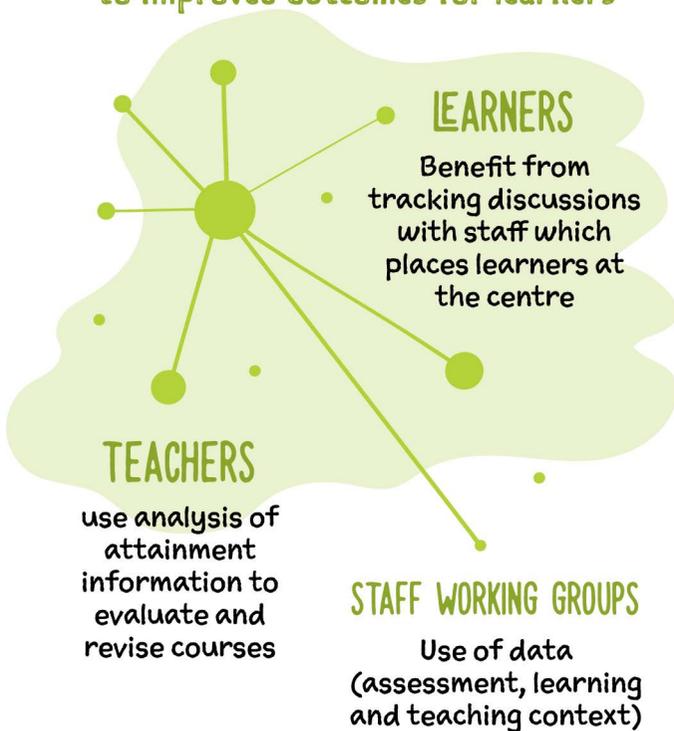
Headteacher



Case study

St Ninian's | High School | East Renfrewshire Council

TRACKING AND ANALYSIS OF DATA LEADS to improved outcomes for learners



» Visit hub page to see full sketchnote «

In St Ninian's High School, the reliability and validity of assessments has been strengthened through well-planned professional learning. This has included an extensive focus on moderation activities within departments and with associated primary schools.

Approaches to moderation have considered the wider holistic learning and teaching context, as well as data that emerges from assessment events. Staff working groups consider the use of data. Additionally, information extracted from analysis of attainment assists teachers in evaluating their courses and planning necessary revisions.

Tracking and monitoring systems assist staff to monitor learners' progress. This includes providing information on attainment and potential areas where attainment can improve. There are clear processes in place that see analysis of emerging data leading directly to interventions by staff. This is assisting with improvements in learning and progress. Learners have discussions with teachers, and they receive advice following analysis of data at key tracking points.



Case study

Whiteness | Primary School and Nursery Class | Shetland Islands Council

Working across THE EARLY LEVEL ALLOWS PRACTITIONERS to moderate children's PROGRESS



A local authority-led drive to improve practitioner access to professional learning, including more opportunities for practitioners to network with other professionals, has improved pedagogy in numeracy. Practitioners undertook a collaborative action research project to identify children's understanding of early number concepts. This has increased their levels of confidence in assessing children's progress and in making professional judgements about the progress of individual children and groups of children. Continuous professional dialogue between practitioners is focused on the skills that children demonstrate. Weekly learning meetings provide a forum for staff to discuss and assess the progress children are making.

Opportunities to work across the early years setting and primary school at early level is supporting practitioners to moderate the progress made by children. This, coupled with using play pedagogy across the early years setting and primary school, enables practitioners and teachers to judge accurately children's progress. As a result, practitioners and teachers successfully meet children's learning needs.



Case study

Aberdeen Grammar | School | Aberdeen City Council



Aberdeen Grammar School provides teachers with high-quality professional learning, focusing upon the use of assessment and the moderation cycle. As part of targeted school improvement, a simple and effective learning, teaching and assessment policy was established. The policy underpins discussions during visits to classrooms. Across the school, teachers provide assessment information for each young person's progress in learning. Rigorous conversations across the teaching staff take place to identify and plan interventions to support progress.

Teachers lead on taking forward improvements to teaching and assessment. They meet regularly to discuss key aspects of learning, formative assessment techniques and giving effective feedback. Subsequently, this enables teachers to plan high-quality assessment which reliably captures young people's learning. Teachers engage with school, cluster and local authority level moderation cycles to provide reliability and support professional judgement. Regular learning conversations take place between teachers and learners. These are integral in supporting learners to reflect on their own learning and recognise their strengths and next steps.



Key feature of highly-effective practice

5

Skilled analysis and interpretation of high-quality assessment data supports robust tracking and monitoring of learners' progress. It ensures that next steps in learning for individuals and groups of learners are identified accurately.



Summary of inspection findings

Staff are using assessment data more effectively to target support and to put in place suitable interventions within literacy and numeracy to address gaps in attainment and achievement. Staff in early learning and childcare settings need to gather data more effectively. This should help them to understand barriers to learning and provide appropriate interventions. Primary and secondary schools continue to improve the reliability of their data on attainment of Curriculum for Excellence levels in literacy and English, and numeracy and mathematics, through the broad general education. Most schools do not yet have reliable data on children's and young people's progress and achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels across other curriculum areas during the broad general education.

Primary schools have in place better arrangements for monitoring and tracking children's progress in literacy and English, and numeracy and mathematics. Staff use data more effectively to target support and to put in place suitable interventions within these curricular areas to address gaps in attainment and achievement. Overall, planning, tracking and monitoring within the broad general education across secondary schools continues to be an area under development.

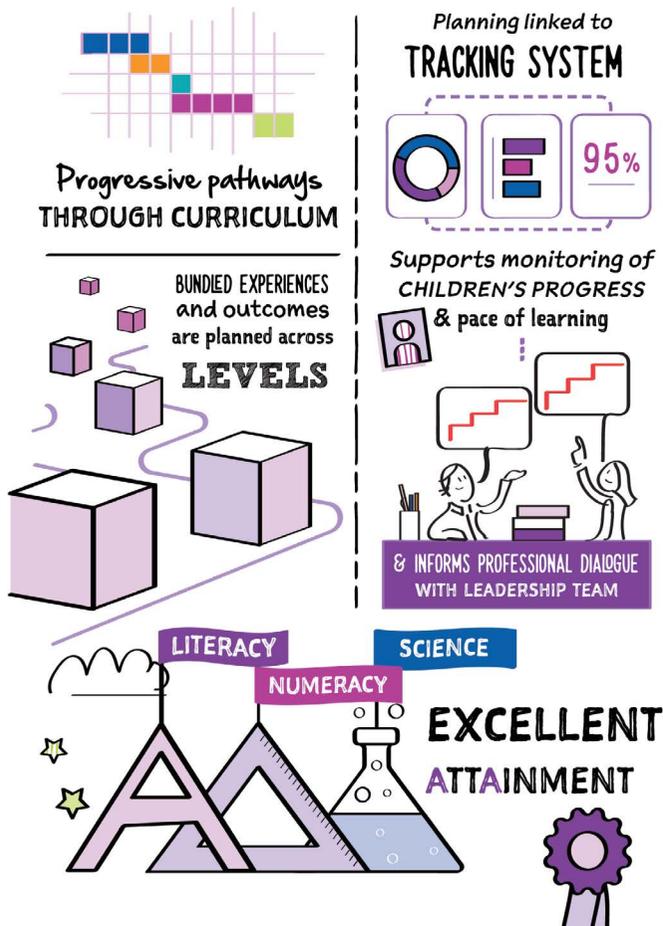
In special schools, senior leaders and staff need to use data more consistently to monitor children's and young people's progress, and plan ongoing learning. The quality, range and application of assessment information is variable across the special school sector. Where effective profiling is in place, staff capture a range of assessment evidence to support the tracking and monitoring of children's and young people's progress.

In effective practice across all sectors, staff make use of the school's equity profile, based on national criteria and local intelligence to support children and young people with additional barriers to learning.



Case study

Our Lady of the Missions | Primary School | East Renfrewshire Council



» Visit hub page to see full sketchnote «

In Our Lady of the Missions Primary School, assessment is an integral part of learning and teaching. Staff use a rich range of formative, summative and standardised assessment data to inform and validate their professional judgement. They make very effective use of the developmental milestones and baseline assessments from the associated early learning and childcare centre. Moderation is easily facilitated and a regular feature of termly planning. Teachers have regular opportunities to moderate children's work, both within school, and with associated schools and local authority colleagues. This participation in moderation activities is ensuring that staff have a shared understanding of standards across the curriculum. Teachers feel confident in their understanding, and use, of assessment data.

Planning for children with additional barriers to learning is highly effective. Robust tracking systems in place ensure that the individual needs of children are being met. Staff know children very well, and use a range of data to ensure the effectiveness of interventions. This informs the strategic planning and the deployment of staff and resources.



Case study

St Ninian's | High School | East Dunbartonshire Council



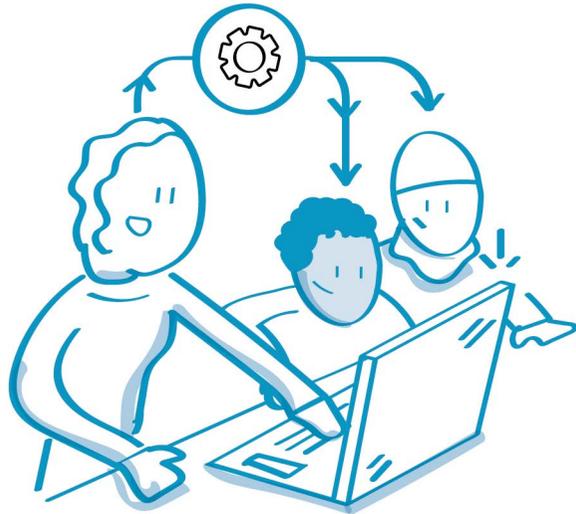
There are robust approaches in place to track and monitor young people's progress during the broad general education. There is a strong whole-school focus on the analysis of data and a wide range of evidence is routinely shared with all staff to inform progression in learning and teaching and promote improved outcomes for all. This supports teachers to plan effectively so that young people can build on prior attainment. As a result, all young people can make continuous progress in their learning when they move from stage to stage, including the move from primary school to secondary school. There are well-developed approaches in place for moderation of standards.

Progress within and across curricular levels is reviewed monthly. This allows for early intervention measures to provide additional targeted support for identified young people. The analysis of the results from the school's assessment provides evidence which informs appropriate developments in learning and teaching.



Case study

St Matthew's Academy | North Ayrshire Council



**TEACHERS identify
and respond promptly to
the needs of young people**

In St Matthew's Academy, well-conceived and manageable approaches to assessment, moderation, tracking, and monitoring in the broad general education, are improving outcomes for young people and closing the poverty-related attainment gap. The skilled use of assessment data and other moderation information has enabled teachers to develop their understanding of school and departmental strengths and improvement priorities. Teachers are able to identify and respond promptly to the needs of young people and remove barriers to learning.

Staff receive valuable support in generating, analysing and interpreting data from a school 'data coach', funded through the Scottish Attainment Challenge. Teachers have developed a system to track, monitor and improve learners' engagement in personal achievement activities. Teachers know their young people well, and make effective use of attainment data, standardised assessment data and the tracking of young people's engagement in personal achievement activities. As a result, teachers plan highly-personalised curricular pathways in a data rich-school. The improved validity and reliability of assessment data ensures that young people embark on appropriate courses in the senior phase.



Key feature of highly-effective practice

6

Children and young people are fully involved in the assessment of learning. High-quality feedback and learning conversations ensure that children and young people have sound knowledge of themselves as learners. They understand what is expected of them, their strengths and the areas where they need to improve.



Summary of inspection findings

Overall, learner conversations and quality feedback are being used effectively to engage children and young people in identifying progress in their learning. In early learning and childcare settings, practitioners achieve this through recording learning using photographs and drawings. They use this as a stimulus for children to talk about their learning and progress. In primary and secondary schools, the quality of oral feedback to children and young people is improving. Increasingly, high-quality learner conversations encourage rich dialogue between teachers and children and young people. This dialogue helps children and young people to understand and evaluate progress and agree areas for development. Written feedback in primary schools is evident mostly on children's writing tasks, learning journals and reporting to parents. Further work is required to build on these positive improvements across other curriculum areas and to ensure children and young people are clear about their next steps in learning.

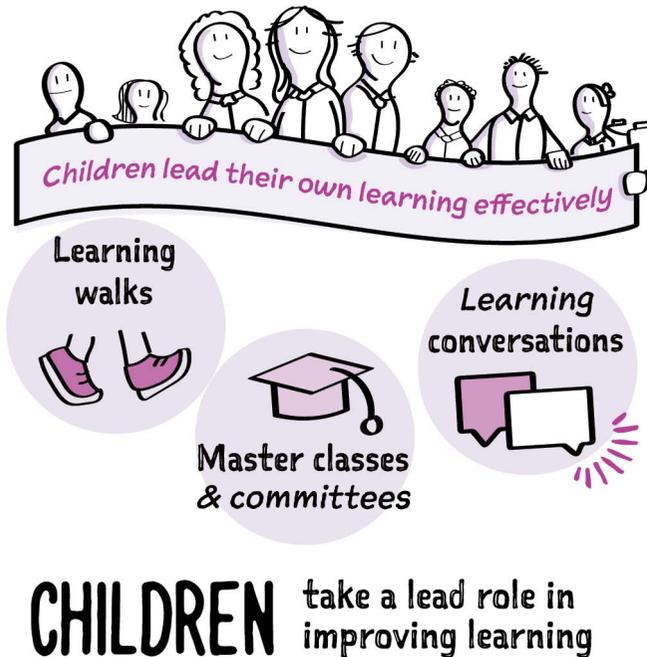
“Staff recognise their responsibility to ensure that all their learners can use these well-developed assessment procedures. This enables learners to understand what their next steps are to improve and develop the skills necessary to achieve well.”

Depute headteacher



Case study

Cairns | Primary School | South Lanarkshire Council



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In Cairns Primary School, assessment is an integral part of planning for effective learning. There is a well-considered and thorough approach to planning assessment across the school, which is supporting staff and learners to understand the purpose of learning. Teachers interact very well with learners and make effective use of assessment in the course of teaching to inform well-timed interventions and agree next steps in learning. All learners have personal learning plans, which they discuss regularly with their teachers and the senior leadership team. These discussions help learners to reflect on their success and be clearer about the purpose of their learning.

Teachers use assessment information very well to agree appropriate targets and next steps in learning with children. They design learning activities to match the needs of children using differentiation effectively. Senior leaders, teaching and support staff ensure learning is coherent and progressive. Factors that might present barriers to learning are monitored, analysed and addressed effectively. Assessment information and data are being used well to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions intended to improve outcomes for targeted children.



Case study

Woodlea | Children's Centre | Dundee City Council



Senior leaders identified the need to review current assessment processes to ensure that they focus on the learning of individual children. Approaches to assessment have developed over recent years and, as a result, are now consistent across the setting.

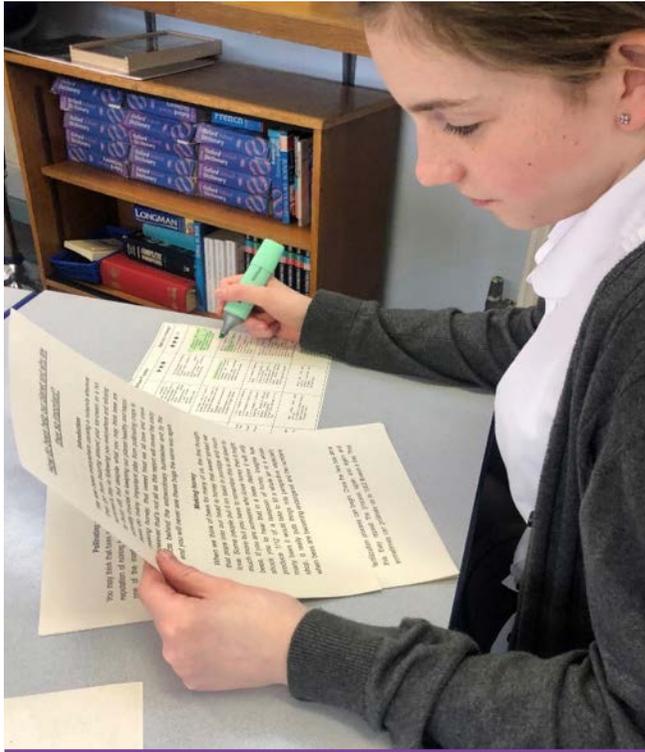
Staff devised guiding principles based on research to support the use of children's learning journals. The team looked outwards to other settings to review their approaches to documenting children's learning and engaged in research both individually and as a group. Staff agreed that observations should be unique to reflect each child's learning with a focus on learning not the activity. Practitioners share observations and photographs with the child as a learning conversation. This involves them more closely in their learning and helps to evidence progress in the child's learning journey.

Practitioners describe a significant improvement in children's understanding and involvement with their learning. Children engage frequently with their journals and share their learning confidently with their friends and practitioners. The new approach is inclusive and supports children and practitioners more effectively in identifying and sharing significant episodes of learning.



Case study

Gartocharn | Primary School | West Dunbartonshire Council



Teachers in Gartocharn Primary School worked collaboratively to produce writing and reading rubrics, using the National Benchmarks and experiences and outcomes as their guide. They involved children in creating the final rubrics, which teachers and children use to assess specific genres of writing.

Children's reflections on their learning have become more detailed and analytical. They are able to discuss their successes and next steps and can illustrate these by referring to feedback and self-evaluation information gathered using the rubric approach. As a result, teachers' planning for next steps in learning is informed by learners' feedback.



Case study

Chapel of Garioch | School | Aberdeenshire Council



The introduction of the 'Learning Reviews' has informed important improvements to the quality of learning, teaching and assessment within the school. Building on the foundation of clear and robust guidance regarding assessment, teachers are using the one-to-one conversations with learners to reflect on their own practice and identify next steps for children. Children also evaluate their own learning regularly and participate in appropriate peer-assessment activities as part of classroom activities.

Learning reviews focus on key activities, self-assessment and evaluating learners' understanding of key teaching and learning points. Teachers provide high-quality feedback and, with learners, develop e-portfolios to identify strengths and next steps in learning. This is helping to ensure that there is breadth, depth and challenge to children's learning and that they have the opportunity to apply their learning across a variety of contexts.

The learning reviews between the teacher and learner build capacity for children to reflect on and take responsibility for their own learning. These conversations are not only providing teachers with an improved understanding of children's progress, but supporting children to develop their understanding of their own learning journey. As a result, almost all children understand the relevance and purpose of their learning and link this to their prior learning.

Prompts for discussion

Taken together, the summary of inspection findings and information from each case study illustrate approaches to assessment that are leading to better outcomes for children and young people.

The following prompts for discussion can be used with staff teams to support you to reflect on your current practice and to help identify what now needs to be done.

Key feature 1	Strong leadership and direction of assessment. Senior leaders have a clear strategy for promoting assessment as an integral part of learning and teaching.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In what ways do staff ensure that our assessment strategy is integral when planning learning and teaching?• How are our professional learning and moderation activities having an impact on learning, teaching and assessment?
Key feature 2	Staff use a range of assessment data very effectively to identify learners' needs and plan learning across the school, specifically for targeted groups of learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To what extent do staff use data consistently across the school to identify the learning needs of children and young people. How do staff use the information gathered, including for targeted groups of children and young people, to support their progress?• How can we make better use of our assessment evidence to inform our learning pathways and curriculum?
Key feature 3	A range of well-considered and carefully planned approaches to moderation, including those using the National Benchmarks within and across schools, supports staff to make confident and accurate judgements, increases the reliability of assessment data and is leading to improved outcomes for learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To what extent do we have a shared understanding of moderation across and within our school community? (i.e. clusters / school groups). How well are our approaches to moderation improving the validity and reliability of teachers' judgements and having a positive impact on children and young people's learning?• How can we ensure information about children's and young people's progress and achievement of CfE levels across all areas of the curriculum are accurate and leading to improved outcomes for learners?



Key feature 4 **High-quality professional learning is building teachers' and early learning and childcare practitioners' confidence and increasing their skills in assessment of learners' progress.**

- In what ways does collaborative professional enquiry feature in and improve our professional learning? How do we use evidence from research and practitioner enquiry to improve outcomes for children and young people?
- To what extent is our professional learning leading to improvements?

Key feature 5 **Availability and skilled analysis and interpretation of high-quality assessment data supports robust tracking and monitoring of learners' progress. It ensures that next steps in learning for individuals and groups of learners are identified accurately.**

- How can we share skills amongst staff to ensure all are confident in making effective use of data to plan future learning for children and young people?
- What steps do we take to ensure all children and young people are making appropriate progress in all areas of the curriculum?

Key feature 6 **Children and young people are fully involved in the assessment of learning. High-quality feedback and learning conversations ensure that children and young people have sound knowledge of themselves as learners. They understand what is expected of them, their strengths and the areas where they need to improve.**

- What are the key features which support our children and young people to have a good understanding of their own strengths and areas for improvement?
- What approaches do we use to ensure children and young people experience high-quality learner conversations and feedback about next steps in learning across the curriculum?

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