

A new vision of assessment – understanding the whole child?

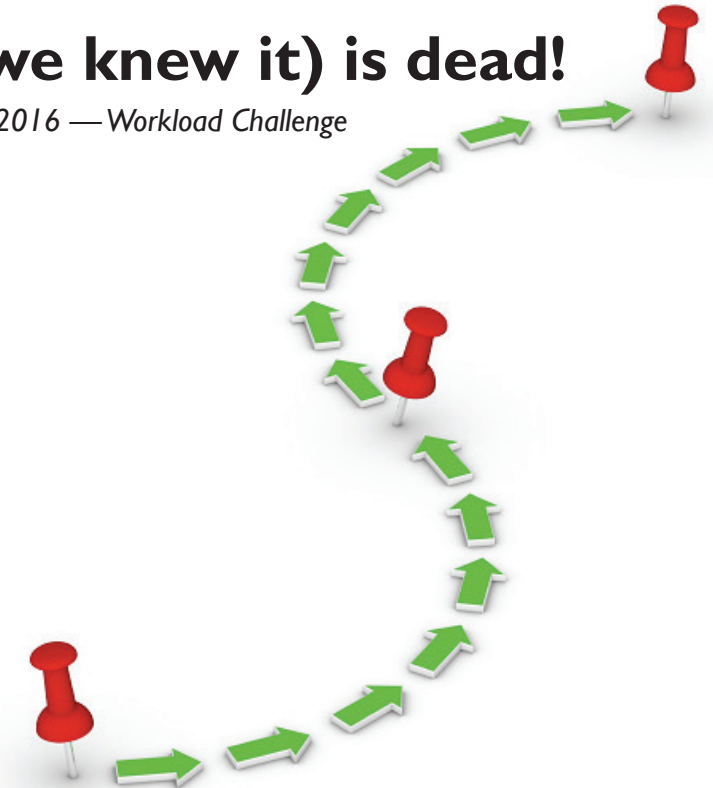


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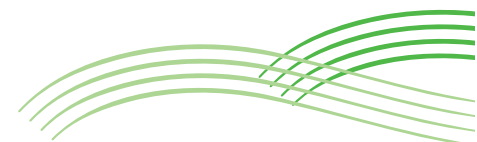
Data (as we knew it) is dead!

Simon Cowley, 28 April 2016 — Workload Challenge



Right from the onset of the new National Curriculum and the removal of levels we decided as a Multi-Academy Trust (The White Horse Federation) to review how we collected and used performance data. We took our 'levels' thinking hats off and started to browse for a new improved version to support assessment in the new era.

Our initial thinking led us to the security of an electronic tracking tool. This enabled us to track pupil progress and produce reports which allowed us to analyse the points of progress for a cohort or particular group.



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Then the penny dropped. We were replacing levels with levels and were not making the most of the freedoms recently given to us to create our own assessment system that worked for our settings and pupils.

We realised that our tracking tool was guiding our thinking on how our curriculum was designed and we felt like we were assessing every movement or turn a pupil made.

So why did the penny drop?

Quite simply by getting to know the new curriculum and providing teachers and senior leaders with professional discussion opportunities to reflect upon the real purpose of assessment – what is happening in the classroom.

The understanding of a pupil's journey through the curriculum, combined with real clarity on the purpose of collecting data to improve pupil outcomes has now provided our teachers with the confidence that their professional voice will be heard. More importantly, that pupil performance will not be dictated by a number, point or a step.

Data (as we knew it) is dead!

We do not collect statistical data that is not relevant to improving pupil outcomes in the classroom. It is not the main driver to gather information about the performance of pupils. Instead our approach is multi-faceted which creates a sense of “known intelligence about the child”, an intelligence toolkit if you like. Dr. Nicholas Capstick, CEO of The White Horse Federation, describes the intelligence toolkit as the following:

- It's about observing and understanding learning behaviours of a learner - how do they engage with learning and how can we best enable this.
- It's about understanding what work scrutiny is telling us with regard to pace, precision, thought and the developmental processes over time. It's how we start to measure progress between point A and B.
- It's about statistical data, the benchmarking against national norms which tell us if a child is working within age related expectations.
- It's about understanding the emotional intelligence of the learner, the personal attributes which help us to focus the learning experiences to gain maximum output. The resilience and tenacity of the learner.
- It's about mapping curriculum coverage, understanding if the learning deficit is because of an inability to understand or an act of omission in the curriculum previously taught.
- It's about the agility of transference, how well is a pupil able to transfer prior learning by being a discerning and discriminating user of that which they know.

The toolkit is not an addition to teachers' workload but makes existing highly effective practice explicit. It ensures all intelligences are considered when assessing a pupil and giving appropriate weighting in each individual's circumstances.

So what do the teachers have to do?

Teachers do not collect or input any statistical data for senior leaders or other audiences throughout the year. They are given simple electronic progression sheets that aide them in the tracking of pupil progress. The sheets are used in reading, writing, maths and science.

The progression sheets are used at the teachers' discretion to monitor curriculum coverage and gaps in learning. The curriculum design and invitation to learn remains in the hands of the professionals – the teachers.

The sheets have clearly identified key performance statements that teachers use to better inform them about whether a pupil is on track to meet age related expectations. The key performance statements were agreed with teachers from all schools within the federation and cross-referenced with other key documentation including the NAHT's KPIs.

Teachers use the progression sheets to identify and record pupils who are accessing, have achieved or achieved with greater depth the curriculum statements.

To ensure teachers are well informed about pupil progress, the federation's online portal allows access to a raft of resources that enable them to be confident about their decisions made for each pupil against National Curriculum statements.

The Pupil Progress Meeting (PPM)

The pupil progress meeting has been the key factor in providing teachers and school leaders with an understanding of which pupils are on track or not on track to meet age related expectations. The PPM is not used to scrutinise data but to have professional dialogue about individual pupils, groups of pupils and the class on their progress and potential indicators that are inhibiting learning.

The aims of the meetings are to enable:

- Staff to engage in professional dialogue about pupil progress
- Quality time to discuss and value teacher judgments
- School leaders to be aware of the progress being made in each cohort
- Teachers and school leaders to analyse the impact of intervention strategies
- Strategic decision making on how additional adults and other resources are used effectively in order to meet the needs of the pupils and the school
- Staff and school leaders to jointly agree key actions in order to address identified priorities arising from the meetings. It is a pooling of colleagues' shared expertise in order to ensure best outcomes for pupils.

School leaders in each of the federation schools have been focussed on providing time to allow teachers to prepare for and attend the PPM. The PPMs are a fundamental part of the monitoring schedule and are placed at pivotal points in the school year to capture the journey of the pupil.

Where are we now?

Conversations in school are now about the pupils rather than the statistical data which has inevitably led to an elevation of trust between teachers and school leaders. The schools have clear and streamlined monitoring and evaluation schedules that have engendered a shared vision of what pupil progress looks like and this is encapsulated in the pupil progress meeting format.

The Curriculum and the assessment of it are inextricably linked.

Teachers have commented on the purposefulness and clarity of the process which now puts pupils at the heart of the discussions rather than numbers, points or steps.

Most importantly
Think, what is right for your school.

