

Perth & Kinross

Local Agreements : 5 - 14 Attainment Levels and National Testing [May 1998]

[Background](#)
[5-14 Attainment Levels](#)
[Policy on National Testing](#)
[Appendix - National Testing in Tayside](#)
[Appendix - Reporting on Pupil Progress in Tayside](#)
5-14 ATTAINMENT LEVELS AND NATIONAL TESTING
REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
ABSTRACT

This report seeks Committee approval for the description of 5-14 levels to be brought into line with 5-14 National Guidelines and requests the Committee to strongly endorse the use of National Test materials in Perth and Kinross schools, as per the guidance given in the National Framework for National Testing, to confirm teachers' assessments of 5-14 levels.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) approves the description of 5-14 levels as per the 5-14 National Guidelines;
- (ii) strongly endorses the use of National Test materials in Perth and Kinross schools, as per the guidance given in the National Framework for National Testing, to confirm teachers' assessments of 5-14 levels, in line with the policy described in paragraphs 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 of this report.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. Tayside Regional Council published its policy statement on Assessment 0-14 in December 1994. The policy has been adopted by Perth and Kinross Council.

2.2. Section 5.1 of the Tayside policy interpreted the 5-14 levels as follows:

A - Almost all pupils in P1-P3, and some in P4-S2, will be working within Level A

B - Some pupils in P3, most in P4, and some in P5-S2, will be working within Level B

C - Some pupils in P4, most in P5-P6, and some in P7-S2, will be working within Level C

D - Some pupils in P5-P6, most in P7, and some in S1-S2, will be working within Level D

E - Some pupils in P7 and S1, and most in S2 will be working within Level E

In primary schools and increasingly in secondary schools, the descriptions of levels have been used to report on pupil progress to parents.

2.3. Section 5.2 (attached as Appendix 1) described the Tayside policy on National Testing and this policy has been followed in Perth and Kinross Council. There is discretion in this policy for teachers to decide when or whether to use National Test materials and also for teachers to use part of tests rather than the whole test containing 4 units.

2.4. The revised strategies for implementing 5-14 in S1/S2 and in primary schools was approved by the Perth and Kinross Education Committee on 3 December 1997 and 11 February 1998 respectively (Report Nos. 97/688 and 98/40 refer). Both revised strategies indicated that advice and support to schools on Assessment 5-14, including a review of the use of National Test materials in both primary and secondary schools, would be produced before the end of the current session.

2.5. Since the production and approval of the revised strategies for implementing 5-14 the situation has moved on in terms of the Government's raising standards and setting targets initiative which was highlighted in the report to Committee on 1 April 1998 (Report No. 98/185 refers). The report indicated that the two issues of the description of the 5-14 levels for reporting to parents and the Council's policies on National Testing required to be addressed as speedily as possible.

2.6. It was indicated that the policies inherited from Tayside were quite ambiguous and leave teachers vulnerable in the current climate. The Director of Education was asked to review these aspects of the policy and bring forward a clear and unambiguous direction for teaching staff in schools for approval by the Education Committee.

3. 5-14 ATTAINMENT LEVELS

3.1. The Committee is asked to approve the recommendation that for all assessment purposes in schools including reporting to parents on pupil progress, 5-14 Attainment levels be described as per the 5-14 National Guidelines. The description is as follows:

Level A - should be attainable in the course of P1 -P3 by almost all pupils

Level B - should be attainable by some pupils in P3 or even earlier, but certainly by most in P4

Level C - should be attainable in the course of P4-P6 by most pupils

Level D - should be attainable by some pupils in P5-P6 or even earlier, but certainly by most in P7

Level E - should be attainable by some pupils in P7-S11 but certainly by most in S2.

If approved this change would be introduced at the beginning of the new school session in August 1998. Advice for parents on the interpretation of the levels will be produced and further staff development for teachers on the use of the levels for planning, recording and reporting pupil work and progress will be delivered.

4. POLICY ON NATIONAL TESTING

4.1. The current policy on use of National Test materials is contained in Appendix 1 to this report. National Test materials cover Reading, Writing and Mathematics at the five attainment levels described above.

4.2. Significant progress has been made in primary schools in using National Tests as designed and in using the materials flexibly. Progress in S1/S2 of secondary schools has been slower. It is believed that some of this lack of progress may be caused by the confusion in how to interpret the Council's policy on National Testing.

4.3. Since Tayside Regional Council's Policy on National Testing was drawn up, teachers, parents and pupils have all become more familiar with the use of 5-14 levels for recording and reporting on progress. Concerns about the purposes of National Testing, the quality of National Test materials and the imposition of policies requiring inappropriate use of National Testing have all, to a substantial extent, been allayed. Outstanding

concerns regarding the implementation, content, and quality of some aspects of the National Test material will require to be addressed at local authority and national levels.

4.4. Within the context of Perth and Kinross Council's quality assurance framework, it is essential that there is a clear understanding of the appropriate use of National Test materials. Parents have a right to expect consistency and an accurate account of how their children are performing and achieving. National Tests confirm teachers' assessments and are the best available method for ensuring consistency within schools and throughout the authority.

4.5. National Tests ensure that there is moderation and consistency in assessing pupils' progress in three crucial aspects of the 5-14 curriculum. Therefore, in the context of assessment policies and procedures in schools, effective learning and teaching policies and in confirming pupils' progress to parents, it is strongly recommended that National Tests should be used. Schools should be reminded that they require to have a whole school policy on assessment covering all aspects of the curriculum and such policies should include reference to the use of National Test materials. Within the context of a policy for effective learning and teaching, and recognising the advantages -in terms of consistency and moderation, National Test materials should be used (in line with the guidance given in the National Framework for National Testing) when appropriate for individual pupils, to confirm teacher assessments. Schools and teachers will be required to justify the use of alternative assessment strategies.

4.6. A revised policy on Assessment 0-14 is being prepared and will encompass the above changes to descriptions to levels and to the approach to the use of National Testing materials. The revised policy will be brought to the Committee for approval early in the new school session.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1. There are no additional financial implications associated with this report. In-service training and support for staff will be met from the current Education Service revenue budget.

6. CONSULTATION

6.1. The Director of Legal, Administrative and Property Services and members of the Workload Sub-group of the Joint Consultative Committee (Teachers) have been consulted on the content of this report.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 The change to the description of the levels to accord with the 5-14 National Guidelines and the strong endorsement of the policy on the use of National Test materials will give teaching staff clear direction in planning, teaching, recording, reporting and evaluating pupils attainment and progress.

BOB MCKAY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

Appendix 1

5.2. National Testing in Tayside

The new arrangements for National Testing were set out in SOED Circular 12192. Tayside Regional Council has considered the advice given in the circular and the policy of the Council with regard to the use of National Test material in its schools is summarised as follows:

- all schools should have a whole school policy on assessment covering all areas of the curriculum;
- schools should use several strategies to assess children's progress and attainment, one of which may be the use of National Test materials in Reading, Writing and Mathematics:
- teachers should have discretion, in line with whole school policy on assessment, as to when or whether National Test material should be used with individual children,
- the use of National Test materials will be extended into 1st and 2nd years of Secondary schools during Session 1994/95 in accordance with Tayside's policy on National Testing as it has operated in Primary schools during Session 1993/94;
- teachers should be given responsibility for deciding if and when National Test material should be used with an individual child but parents have the right to instruct the school that their children's education should not include the use of National Test material;
- appropriate assessment strategies for each area of the curriculum, including the use of National Test materials in English Language and Mathematics, should be phased in over a period of time in line with the school's development plan for the implementation of the 5- 14 Program;
- teachers should only use National Test material with very young children (P1 -P3) when they are confident that no stress will be experienced by them and that there will be positive benefits to their future learning,
- where National Test materials are to be used teachers should plan their use with individuals or groups of children as part of every day classroom work;
- advice will be given to Head Teachers on appropriate ways to report overall attainments (including information from the use of National Test materials) to School Boards. This advice will emphasise the need for confidentiality for individual children;
- staff development and advice for teaching staff in all aspects of assessment policy and procedures should be given a high priority;
- awareness-raising activities for parents on all aspects of assessment but particularly National Testing and Reporting should be arranged.

National Test material may be used, where appropriate, to complement and confirm a teacher's own professional judgment of the progress of children. National Test material should not be used to 'start' or 'block' test children in order to find out the level they are working within. The advice given to teachers by the Assessment Unit of the Scottish Examination Board on when to use National Test material with individual children is fully endorsed. Children will be ready to use National Test material when, in their classwork, they have covered, within a particular level, the learning activities associated with the strands for the target attainment outcomes in Mathematics and those for Reading or Writing, as appropriate; and in their classwork, they are consistently producing, or capable of producing, work of the standard described in the attainment targets within the appropriate Level, across all of the strands; and they are able to cope with the National Test material with the degree of independence and confidence which the materials require.

In addition teachers should be prepared to adjust the planned timing of the use of National Test materials to take account of the individual circumstances of children (e.g. recent illness or absence from school) to ensure that no undue stress is placed on any pupil.

As with very young children, teachers should only consider using National Test materials with children who have a Record of Needs when they are confident that no stress will be experienced by them and that there are positive benefits to their future learning. In addition, the parents of such children should be fully consulted to decide whether they wish their children to participate in using National Test materials.

5.3. Reporting on Pupil Progress in Tayside

Tayside Regional Council wishes to encourage effective communication between home and school and to promote partnership and collaboration between parents and teachers for the benefit of children.

Assessment procedures in school should inform parents, teaching staff and other relevant professionals and the children themselves about attainment and progress. Children should be involved in the home/school partnership and should receive feedback on the progress they are making.

Tayside Regional Council endorses the principles of a good school report (see para 4.3) but in addition wishes to promote the effective use of parent contact evenings with the report and parental responses to a forming the agenda for meetings. Tayside' policy on Reporting Pupil Progress is summarised as follows:

- reporting should be viewed as part of the whole school approach to learning and teaching and to assessment. Schools require to have a whole-school policy on assessment;
- a Tayside reporting format, notes of guidance and a support pack for teachers have been produced for Primary schools. Advice and support for Secondary schools on 5-14 Reporting formats and procedures will be available in October 1994. Schools will use the new Reporting formats and procedures at an appropriate point in the next two sessions in accordance with the stage reached in the school's development of aspects of 5-14.
- the new reporting procedures provide opportunities for home and school to work in partnership for the benefit of children. The new Report form will be issued to parents on an annual basis prior to a parent-teacher evening;
- parents play a vital role in the process and will be invited to respond to the written report at parent-teacher meetings and/or through a parents' response sheet attached to the report form. Outwith normal reporting times, regular contact between home and school is encouraged:
- information on children's progress and attainment should be shared and discussed, not just with parents, but with the child and other relevant professionals;
- the written report will cover a child's strengths and development needs in all curriculum areas.'