
Ymateb i Ymgynghoriad / Consultation Response

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Pwnc / Subject:	Mandatory reporting of online National Reading and Numeracy Test results

Background information about Estyn

Estyn is the Office of Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. As a Crown body, Estyn is independent of the Welsh Government.

Estyn's principal aim is to raise the standards and quality education and training in Wales. This is primarily set out in the Learning and Skills Act 2000 and the Education Act 2005. In exercising its functions, Estyn must give regard to the:

- Quality of education and training in Wales;
- Extent to which education and training meets the needs of learners;
- Educational standards achieved by education and training providers in Wales;
- Quality of leadership and management of those education and training providers;
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of learners; and,
- Contribution made to the well-being of learners.

Estyn's remit includes (but is not exclusive to) nurseries and non-maintained settings, primary schools, secondary schools, independent schools, pupil referrals units, further education, adult community learning, local government education services, work-based learning, and teacher education and training.

Estyn may give advice to the Assembly on any matter connected to education and training in Wales. To achieve excellence for learners, Estyn has set three strategic objectives:

- Provide accountability to service users on the quality and standards of education and training in Wales;
- Inform the development of national policy by the Welsh Government;
- Build capacity for improvement of the education and training system in Wales.

This response is not confidential.

Mandatory reporting of online National Reading and Numeracy Test results

Welsh Government guidance is clear about the purpose of the national tests:

'The National Tests are for formative use so that teachers in all maintained schools have information on the reading and numeracy skills of their learners and a common understanding of strengths and areas for improvement in these skills¹.'

The guidance goes on to note that these assessments:

'are focused on understanding learner progress, and not school performance or accountability².'

It reiterates this point further:

'The purpose of the National Tests (both paper-based and online) is formative, enabling teachers to assess how learners' reading and numeracy skills are developing and to use this assessment to inform teaching³.'

Estyn recognises the importance of effective formative assessment as part of a holistic assessment system and supports the above points. We recognise that the focus of the personalised assessments is to help learners progress, by helping teachers to understand what pupils can do, what they need to work on and their next steps in learning.

The online system for personalised assessments supplies information directly to schools so that leaders and teachers can use it to support teaching and learning. This happens automatically so there is no need for manual transfer of data through the local authority.

We therefore agree with Welsh Government's proposal to remove the requirement for governing bodies to send the results of online national assessments to their local authority.

In addition, the Successful Futures report warned that *'where assessment becomes dominated by accountability processes, as can happen, the consequences for children and young people's learning can be damaging⁴*. Further, an OECD report on evaluation and assessment also cautions that *'...high-stakes uses of evaluation and assessment results might lead to distortions in the education process...'⁵*

We therefore supported Welsh Government's move to re-establish the purpose of assessment and uncouple it from high stakes accountability by ceasing the routine publication of teacher assessment and national test data at school and local authority level. Removing the mandatory reporting of test results would be a further step in this uncoupling. Mandatory reporting of the national test information to local authorities may encourage these bodies to see the assessment outcomes as a way of scrutinising schools, or may cause school leaders to perceive that the assessment outcomes contribute to a measure of accountability, and so should be avoided. Inspection evidence suggests that where local consortia previously created benchmarking tables from national test data, schools focused too much on how well pupils 'scored', and this reduced their focus on the formative nature of the information the tests provide.

¹ National Reading and Numeracy Tests – administration handbook 2019/20. Guidance document no: 253/2019: October 2019

² National Reading and Numeracy Tests – administration handbook 2019/20. Guidance document no: 253/2019: October 2019

³ National Reading and Numeracy Tests – administration handbook 2019/20. Guidance document no: 253/2019: October 2019

⁴ Successful Futures. Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales. February 2015

⁵ OECD (2013) Synergies for Better Learning: An International Perspective on Evaluation and Assessment