

The Rochford Review Recommendations: An analysis.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/rochford-review-final-report

Firstly, a slight warning; these are recommendations not definites. Other previous government sponsored reviews have made recommendations that have not been carried through – The Salt Review of 2010 recommended distinct teacher training for SLD and PMLD for example. However, given both the DfE’s and Ofsted’s significant involvement in the deliberations and the fact that there are no real cost factors here, I would be very surprised if they were not accepted.

Having said that, schools and teachers who are expecting a complete change need to take a closer look, because it’s not that simple. Yes the P scales have gone (will go) as a statutory assessment, but they’ve been replaced by a (statutory) requirement to report on the

*interim pre-key stage standards assess(ing) pupils’ knowledge and understanding in the 3 core subjects of English reading, English writing and mathematics. As these are the focus of statutory national assessment for the majority of primary school pupils, the group recommends that they should also be the focus of **statutory** national assessment for all pupils capable of, and engaged in, **subject-specific learning**, including those with SEND (p6; my emphasis).*

So instead of English, Maths and Science, we now have English Reading (ER), English Writing (EW) and Maths (M) with three interim standards set for each at KS1 and five interim standards set for each at KS2 **for all pupils working on subject specific learning**. We can effectively therefore look on these as the new P scales, with two major differences.

Firstly, the interim pre-key stage standards (for want of a better mnemonic I’m going to call them IPKeS Standards) offer a ‘secure-fit’ model, meaning that each pupil **must** achieve **every** part of the judgment to secure that level. This is opposed to the P Scales, which offered a ‘best-fit’ model which (the Review records) led to uncertainties on judgement. I personally think that’s a dubious analysis, but let’s leave that aside.

Secondly, the cognitive and skill steps between the three (KS1) and five (KS2) levels are considerably greater than the P scales, reaching as they do from about P4/5 ish to (in old money) L2/3. These are ER1, EW1 and M1 through to ER3, EW3 and M3 for KS1 and ER5, EW5 and M5 for KS2, that is, the level just below that needed to be put in for the standardised testing arrangements. The IPKeS Standards can be found in the document under Appendix B, pages 29-37, and need to be studied very carefully by all teachers and school leaders.

The next VERY big change is the emphasis on ‘subject specific learning’. It seems evident from the way the Review has phrased ER1, EW1, and M1 at both KS1 and KS2, that it has looked to take out any pupil with PMLD and probably most working at P4. There is however, NO REQUIREMENT for any pupil to work on

subject specific learning if the school feels that this is not an appropriate curriculum model.

*Assessment that is tailored for the individual child builds on the teacher's knowledge of the pupil and is aligned with a curriculum that is appropriate for that child's needs. **Schools already have the freedom to use any curriculum they feel is appropriate for the needs and requirements of these pupils** (p20, my emphasis).*

Schools must however indicate that pupils are not at (or probably anywhere near) the 'expected (testing) standards'.

*Pupils not engaged in subject-specific learning will be included in the data that is reported. Schools will report that these pupils have not demonstrated evidence of all the statements **at 'entry to the expected standard'** (p26, my emphasis).*

Schools may therefore decide that a number of pupils working consistently and over time within the higher reaches of the P scales, especially at KS2, do not and will not reach the required testing standards and therefore should not be involved in subject specific learning (SSL). Or they may take a view that some SSL is appropriate, but perhaps not as much as might have gone on in KS1 when secure, longer term judgements might be more difficult to reach. In which latter case, they will have to report on the IPKeS Standards. It seems evident (but is unstated) that if older pupils (KS3 and 4 for example) have still not reached the IPKeS standard 5 (that is L2/3 in old money) the argument for them being involved in SSL becomes weaker and weaker the older they get. Schools will however, need to make their own judgement on this and justify it accordingly. I personally don't think this is difficult to do, and would argue that it is much more difficult to continue to argue for SSL as a matter of course.

The third VERY big change is the emphasis on Barry Carpenter and colleague's CLDD (Complex Learning Difficulties and Disabilities) project, out of which came the Engagement Scales. For pupils not engaged in SSL the 7 Engagement Scales (inter-related but not developmental) of responsiveness, curiosity, discovery, anticipation, persistence, initiation and investigation, now become the yardsticks against which **all** progress is measured. On first glance this is strange to say the least, because similar indicators are to be found in the seven key milestones of Routes for Learning (WAG, 2006) and go back even further in the archives of PMLD assessment to, for example, the works of Mel Nind and Dave Hewett (1994), Erica Brown (1996) and Judith Coupe-O'Kane and Julie Goldbart (1998). The emphasis on all of these is however, very much on PMLD or at least the early developmental stages, rather than SLD. Yet the Review is clear:

These inter-related indicators can be used to inform the assessment of pupils with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties and to provide evidence of pupil progress (p18).

So whilst the good news is that the

different indicators should not be viewed in a strict hierarchical sense, but more as a guide for assessing a pupil's effective engagement in the learning process (p18)

the bad news is that however appropriate for those with PMLD, such indicators are dubious in their relevance for SLD, especially for pupils working at P5 and beyond.

This then becomes my one major criticism of the Reviews recommendations, that they have not seriously looked at a more appropriate baseline methods of assessment for pupils with SLD, and I'm thinking directly of Mike Sissons' work on MAPP (2010) and in particular his four 'Continuum of Skills Development' measures. For those unfamiliar with MAPP, these are (i) Prompting – moving from dependence to independence (ii) Fluency – moving from approximate to accurate (iii) Maintenance – moving from inconsistent to consistent and (iv) Generalisation – moving from a single to many contexts. Using these four areas, moves us directly into being able to both recognise and record lateral progress and manages to relate to both product and process based teaching.

Nonetheless, this is a step in the right direction, even though it is still not the final answer.

Peter Imray (October 2016)

References

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