

**REPORT TO:** EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 15 DECEMBER 2003

**REPORT ON:** ASSESSMENT, TESTING AND REPORTING 3-14: RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

**REPORT BY:** DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

**REPORT NO:** 816-2003

**1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 This report seeks approval for a response to the Scottish Executive on draft proposals to revise the arrangements for assessment, testing and reporting at ages 3-14.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 The Education Committee is recommended to:

- i) approve the response set out in this report

and

- ii) instruct the Director of Education to monitor developments in this area and to report to the Education Committee on recommendations any changes to procedures resulting from the outcomes of the national review.

**3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 There are no additional financial costs arising as a result of the implementation of this report.

**4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Nil.

**5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Nil.

**6.0 REPORT**

6.1 As part of the national programme, Assessment is for Learning, the Scottish Executive has produced a number of options for revised procedures for the conduct of assessment, testing and reporting in relation

to the 5-14 Curriculum. These proposals in a document entitled, Assessment, Testing and Reporting 3-14: Consultation on Partnership Commitments, have been circulated to Education Authorities, Primary and Secondary Schools and to Parents. Copies of the document are available in the Member's Lounge and with Group Secretaries.

6.2 At present all schools report progress through the 5-14 curriculum to Dundee City Council Education Department and to the Scottish Executive Education Department on an annual basis. This report covers the levels of attainment achieved by pupils in P3, P4, P6 and P7 in Language and Mathematics. Schools use this information to report to parents, to monitor the progress of pupils and groups of pupils, to identify strategies to improve attainment and to set improvement targets. Progress in these areas is reviewed by Service Managers of the Education Department with the Head Teacher of each school as part of the annual School Review.

6.3 In assessing pupil attainment teachers may use their own judgment and assessments of pupil work. However all teachers in Dundee are encouraged to confirm their judgment by the use of National Test materials at appropriate times during a pupil's school career.

6.3 The Scottish Executive have a requirement to gather information on a national basis as one means of monitoring the delivery of the 5-14 curriculum and of assessing progress in attainment. This is part of the National Priorities in Education. The consultation document on Assessment, Testing and Reporting 3-14 offers the option of continuing National Tests or of moving to a Survey of Attainment conducted on a sample basis either annually or on a four year cycle. It also asks if subjects in addition to Language and Mathematics should be included in this survey. The document also considers changing the present annual report forms for parents used in Dundee and across Scotland. It is suggested that these might be replaced by a more comprehensive Annual Progress Plan

## **7.0 CONCLUSIONS**

7.1 Moves to improve the quality and quantity of information to parents on the progress of their children are to be welcomed. The response to consultation therefore indicates that Dundee City Council would support the introduction of an Annual Progress Plan. However it is clear that the completion of such plans should not detract from time for learning and teaching and therefore the development and introduction of such plans needs to be carefully monitored by the Education Department.

7.2 Dundee City Council wishes all teachers and schools to have accurate and detailed information on the progress and attainment of individual pupils and groups of pupils. This information is necessary to inform learning and teaching, to report to parents and to help schools to set targets for improvement and to monitor progress towards these targets. Dundee City Council is required as part of the National Priorities in Education to monitor progress in the 5-14 curriculum on an annual basis. This requirement for attainment information exists regardless of how the information is gathered

and reported to parents.

7.3 The move to a National Assessment Bank of assessment materials which can be used by teachers is welcomed. The proposal to introduce assessment items in areas other than Language and Mathematics is also supported but there is the clear expectation that this should not lead to an increase in the amount of assessment but should assist existing assessment arrangements.

7.4 The introduction of a Scottish Survey of Achievement is supported. It is felt that sampling schools on a four year cycle which might include subjects in addition to Language and Mathematics would give a national picture of progress and is preferable to an annual cycle. There would however be grave concerns if information from this survey were to be used to construct "league tables" of schools or Education Authorities.

## **8.0 CONSULTATION**

8.1 The Chief Executive, the Depute Chief Executive (Finance), the Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Head Teachers of city schools and parents have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

## **9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

9.1 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.

Anne Wilson  
Director of Education

20 November 2003

**ASSESSMENT, TESTING AND REPORTING 3-14  
CONSULTATION ON PARTNERSHIP COMMITMENTS**

**OPTIONS FOR CONSULTATION: YOUR VIEWS**

Section A: Replacing reports with Annual Progress Plans

**ANNUAL PROGRESS PLANS: YOUR VIEWS**

**Option 1: develop a common framework for Annual Progress Plans/redesigned reports, but with scope for local adaptation**

Yes  No

**Option 2: produce a single national Annual Progress Plan/redesigned reports format that is agreed and used by all schools.**

Yes  No

**Other options/comments:**

**Dundee City Council strongly supports developments in assessment and reporting which will more effectively engage pupils and parents in the learning process. This can best be done when pupils are involved in and informed about the assessment process. It is clearly desirable that pupils and parents are provided with better feedback on progress and information on the next steps in learning.**

**Dundee City Council therefore supports in principle the proposal to introduce a revised reporting format based on an Annual Progress Report which would be related to Pupil Personal Learning Plans**

**However it is clear that work still remains to be done to produce Annual Progress Reports and Personal Learning Plans which can fulfil the principles set out above while being feasible and practical in the school situation. In particular it is crucial that Personal Learning Plans can be maintained, and Progress Reports produced, by school staff without undue additions to workload which would detract from the learning and teaching process.**

**Dundee City Council schools are currently involved in piloting developments in these areas as part of the National Assessment Programme and the Education Department would wish to see final details of proposed plans and reports before confirming its recommendation to the Education Committee on their adoption and use.**

**SECTION B: REPLACING THE CURRENT PROVISION OF NATIONAL TESTS WITH A NATIONAL ASSESSMENT BANK**

**REPLACING THE CURRENT PROVISION OF NATIONAL TESTS : YOUR VIEWS**

**Option 1: End the provision of national materials for testing altogether and replace them with local examples and moderation**

Yes  No

**Other options/comments:**

**Dundee City Council strongly supports the use of local assessment examples and the use of moderation within and between schools. This is already an established part of practice within City schools.**

**Notwithstanding the above it is felt that the availability of national materials such as those proposed for the National Assessment Bank would provide teachers with the opportunity to make use of these materials to confirm their own judgments and thereby to provide a degree of consistency between schools. It is not expected that the use of such materials would be mandatory.**

**Option 2:**

**(a) Introduce the National Assessment Bank, for use in the same way as before to confirm teachers' judgements**

Yes  No

**(b) In addition, support schools and authorities to introduce local moderation arrangements**

Yes  No

**(c) Extend the range of materials in the assessment bank to include other aspects of the curriculum and Core Skills**

**Science** Yes  No

**Social subjects** Yes  No

**Modern languages** Yes  No

**Practical assessments** Yes  No

**Core Skills** Yes  No

**Other options/comments:**

**The provision of good assessment materials for other areas of the curriculum would help teachers and schools to monitor and evaluate progress in these areas. Again it is not envisaged that such assessment would be compulsory or would replace the judgement of teachers. Rather that it would provide teachers with extra assessment instruments which would help to confirm that judgement.**

**Any introduction of assessment in other curricular areas would need to be carefully managed and be progressive and measured. There is a clear need to balance the use of good assessment materials to provide feedback with the need to ensure learning is not disrupted. Good assessment materials can provide teachers with feedback on pupil progress, can help monitor the attainment of stages and groups and will provide information for reports to parents. However the prime focus for the teacher is on learning and teaching. Assessment should compliment this process and not interfere with it.**

**SECTION C: MEASURING IMPROVEMENT IN OVERALL ATTAINMENT THROUGH A SCOTTISH SURVEY OF ACHIEVEMENT RATHER THAN RELYING ON NATIONAL TESTS**

**NATIONAL MONITORING OF ATTAINMENT: YOUR VIEWS**

**Option 1:** The Executive continues the annual 5-14 survey of attainment as currently, by collecting school-level data from authorities and pupil-level attainment data from all authorities from 2004-2005. The current Assessment of Achievement Programme would continue alongside the annual 5-14 Survey.

Yes  No

**Other options/comments:**

Dundee City Council accepts that the Executive has a requirement to collect information on levels of attainment which helps to inform its view on progress in education across the country. Dundee City Council would support the move away from the annual 5-14 survey of attainment and towards a Scottish Survey of Achievement on a sample basis.

Notwithstanding the above Dundee City Council would wish to ensure that Dundee schools continued to collect information on pupil progress which allowed them to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of learning and teaching and the impact of strategies to improve pupil attainment.

**Option 2:** Introduce the Scottish Survey of Achievement (SSA) to monitor national attainment. Discontinue the Annual 5-14 Survey.

Yes  No

(b) Extend the survey sample to include S4 Yes  No

(c) Build in links between survey data and annual census data/ScotXed data for each sampled pupil

Yes  No

(d) Build in links between survey data and schools' attainment data for each sampled pupil

Yes  No

(e) Extend the sample each year to include whole small groups of pupils with special characteristics, so their progress can be monitored and compared with that of the wider population

Yes  No



**Other options/comments:**

**The Scottish Survey of Achievement should provide information about progress in attainment at national, Education Authority and Sample School level. This will provide feedback on the effectiveness of national and local strategies for improving pupil achievement as part of the National Priorities in Education.**

**The current four year cycle would allow trends to be identified rather than yearly fluctuations. A four year cycle with English, Mathematics and other subjects would help to monitor progress in important areas such as Environmental Studies and avoid the narrowing of the curriculum by a focus on only literacy and numeracy.**

**There are however concerns and Dundee City Council would wish to be assured that data would not be misused to provide the public with league tables of Education Authorities or of schools. To some extent this is less likely with a four year cycle than with the current annual survey.**

**While useful information could be provided to Education Authorities and schools by sampling particular groups of pupils eg the most able or the most deprived pupil confidentiality would need to be ensured and the use of such information would need to be carefully considered.**

**Option 3: Introduce SSA as in Option 2, but change the subject cycle to include English and mathematics, or other subject areas, more often.**

**(a) Include new subjects by 'pairing' on the current 4-year cycle (state which subjects in the comments box below)**

Yes  No

**(b) Survey only English and mathematics every year**

Yes  No

**(c) Survey English or mathematics, and one other subject, each year**

Yes  No

**(d) Continue to include embedded Core Skills in each survey**

Yes  No

**Other options/comments:**

**An annual cycle focusing on English and Mathematics would seem to replace the current 5-14 Survey with its attendant problems. Identifying national trends in English, Mathematics and other subjects does not require an annual survey. There is a danger that taking part in the national survey and undertaking their own ongoing assessments would constitute a significant assessment overload for those schools involved.**

**Dundee City Council would therefore not support the move to an annual Survey of Achievement**

**Name**

Anne Wilson

**Your title or role in education (job title, teacher, parent, community member etc)**

Director of Education

**Organisation represented (if relevant)**

**Dundee City Council**

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**Confidentiality**

It is normal practice for responses to consultation papers to be made publicly available, unless respondents request that their comments remain confidential.

If you would like your comments to remain confidential, please tick the box.

**Acknowledgements**

All responses will be acknowledged, either in writing or electronically. However, please note that in view of the size and nature of the consultation exercise, it will not be possible to respond individually to comments received.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR VIEWS**

**PLEASE NOW RETURN YOUR RESPONSE TO:**

Assessment is for Learning  
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