



## Scottish national assessments inform next steps for learning

ACER works with the Scottish Government, in partnership with Twig and SCHOLAR, to develop and deliver assessments of literacy and numeracy learning progress. Since 2017, more than a million assessments have been completed by children and young people throughout Scotland.

The Scottish Government commissioned ACER led consortium to develop and deliver the Scottish National Standardised Assessments (SNSA) as part of the National Improvement Framework which outlined the Scottish Government's plan to deliver improvements in education. The framework was developed in 2016 to support high quality learning and teaching and intended to provide robust, consistent, and transparent data to extend understanding of what works and drive improvements across all parts of the system.

To meet these aims it was essential to gather data on children's progress at key points in their education, including data on differences between those from the least and most deprived areas. One of the seven key drivers of this improvement, "Assessing Children's Progress", made specific reference to using data to achieve excellence and equity and introduced the use of national standardised assessments. Improved data of this kind would support the planning of further interventions to ensure that all learners achieve their best results and this information would be provided by the SNSA.

The assessments have been available for use in publicly funded schools since August 2017. The assessments have been constructed specifically to assess and align with the literacy and numeracy elements of the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence, which was also introduced in 2017. ACER introduced the assessments in a short period of time, with only 10 months between the commencement of the project and the start of live assessments.

Scottish children and young people are now assessed at the ages of 4, 7, 11 and 14 (Primary 1, Primary 4, Primary 7, and Secondary 3), once in each school year. The flexible delivery model

allows children and young people to be assessed at any time in the school year that is judged suitable for the school, class and individual learner. The SNSA are delivered online on a range of devices, they are automatically scored and the reports to schools and teachers are provided as soon as a learner completes an assessment. Additional reports are available for local authorities.

The assessments are online, adaptive and selected assessments have audio support. Each learner is presented with a similar number of items, but the difficulty of the pathway completed by different learners varies according to their performance on earlier questions. The adaptive nature of the SNSA means that the experience for each learner is modified so that the assessment is neither too hard nor too easy, but appropriate for their level of capacity. The adaptive design also means the diagnostic value of the assessment is optimised.

The SNSA is not a 'high stakes' assessment. The approach is based around next steps in learning. The focus is on formative, diagnostic assessment to improve learning and teaching, so an adaptive model helps to maximise the diagnostic information available for each learner. Reports include both diagnostic information and information on the learner's capacities in relation to a national norm. The assessments are not intended for use as an accountability tool and the Scottish Government have made great efforts to ensure they do not have access to data that could be used for such purposes.

The assessments are designed to accommodate the needs of children and young people who require additional support and the system is designed to be compatible with a range of assistive devices. Learners can use the devices they are familiar with from their everyday use in the classroom to support

them in completing the assessments, including software and devices such as text readers, screen readers, and switches. Detailed guidance is available for teachers in relation to Additional Support Needs (ASN) and English as an Additional Language (EAL).

The information gathered from the SNSA provides teachers with diagnostic information on aspects of reading, writing and numeracy to support the teacher's professional judgement and assessment of children's progress to plan next steps in learning. The SNSA complement the assessment information gathered from everyday learning situations, and through observation and interaction with children and young people. The SNSA platform is user-friendly, and training and help materials are provided for teachers.

The reports focus on providing tools that enable schools to identify areas of strength and weakness to better target future learning and teaching, and also to provide summary data on performance across a cohort. Future reports will be able to look at performance and progress over time.

Any questions and queries about the SNSA and its platform are handled by a service desk throughout the school year. ■

## LINKS

Find out more about SNSA at <https://standardisedassessment.gov.scot/> or in the National report for academic year 2017 to 2018 (PDF) at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-national-standardised-assessments-national-report-academic-year-2017-2018/>

Find out more information about the Scottish National Improvement Framework at <https://www.gov.scot/policies/schools/national-improvement-framework/>