



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Securing teacher assessment – programme of external verification

Programme report – Year 2



Information

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Audience

Primary and secondary headteachers and heads of departments of maintained schools; secondary assessment coordinators and teachers at Key Stages 2 and 3, governing bodies of mainstream schools; local authorities; regional consortia and national bodies with an interest in education.

Overview

This publication is a report on the 2015/2016 outcomes of the external verification programme, designed to improve the accuracy and consistency of teacher assessment through high-quality feedback to all key stakeholders.

Action required

Teachers, headteachers and all key stakeholders are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the findings and recommendations of the second year of the external verification programme.

Further information

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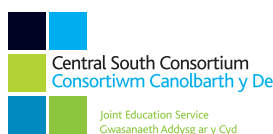
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This document can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at gov.wales/learning

Related documents

Securing teacher assessment – programme of external verification (Welsh Government, 2016); *National external verification programme: Frequently asked questions* (Welsh Government, 2016); *Teacher assessment: strengthening arrangements to improve reliability, consistency and confidence* (Welsh Government, 2015)



Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

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Introduction

The Welsh Government consulted on proposals to strengthen teacher assessment arrangements (*Teacher assessment: Strengthening arrangements to improve reliability, consistency and confidence*) from December 2014 to March 2015. The proposals included strengthening cluster moderation and the introduction of an external verification programme.

A key outcome of this consultation was the announcement of a national programme, commencing in summer 2015, to provide external verification of mathematics and science in Year 1, with the focus moving in Year 2 to English/Welsh second language in English-medium schools; and Welsh/English in Welsh-medium schools.

The contract to manage the verification process was awarded to a partnership consisting of the four regional consortia and CDSM Interactive Solutions. The 'Partnership' jointly managed and implemented the programme in conjunction with school leaders and subject specialists. The Partnership was established with the support of ADEW, the Association of Directors of Education in Wales.

The key focus of the programme was to strengthen the accuracy and consistency of teacher assessment through high-quality feedback to teachers, headteachers and all key stakeholders.

The programme

In the first year of the programme a number of key tasks were undertaken which were to:

- develop common processes and procedures for the verification process, including common templates to be used by all verifiers and lead verifiers
- deliver a nationally consistent training programme for all lead verifiers and verifiers
- develop and implement a school sampling methodology, in order to undertake visits to 10 per cent of the schools in Wales
- provide key information to selected schools about the process and the school visit
- develop a national process to deal with any disagreements in judgements
- provide all materials and resources bilingually.

In the second year of the programme a number of key tasks were undertaken, which were to:

- revise the processes, procedures and documentation, taking into account the learning from Year 1 of the programme. This work was undertaken in consultation with lead verifiers and relevant subject leads at workshops held in February 2016
- arrange verifier training for March 2016, extending it to two days at one common venue. This was to ensure all aspects were covered in sufficient detail and verifier received training prior to any cluster moderation meetings in April
- develop a programme of cluster visits (20 per cent of cluster meetings national)
- develop a programme of school visits for English, Welsh, and Welsh second language (10 per cent of schools nationally)
- revise the school sampling methodology in light of recommendations from Year 1 of the programme
- appoint an external independent evaluator for the final two years of the programme
- work with CDSM to further develop the online system to allow verifiers access to new training materials and templates, and to facilitate the sharing of draft reports with lead verifiers for quality assurance purposes.

Each consortium appointed a lead verifier to be responsible for a team of verifiers and to oversee the verification process in a different consortium area to their own.

- Lead verifier for CSC, from EAS.
- Lead verifier for EAS from CSC.
- Lead verifier for ERW from GwE.
- Lead verifier for GwE from ERW.

The majority of verifiers were practising headteachers or subject leaders from schools. Verifiers were recruited from consortia staff, only when school-based staff were not available. In order to strengthen the credibility of the programme, a proportion of verifier visits were undertaken in a different consortium area to the main one to which they were allocated.

Year 1 – visit summary

A total of 55 verifiers were deployed to 149 schools. Of these schools:

- 71 were English-medium Key Stage 2 settings
- 35 were Welsh-medium Key Stage 2 settings
- 28 were English-medium Key Stage 3 settings
- 15 were Welsh-medium Key Stage 3 settings.

In primary schools verification focused on both mathematics and science. Secondary schools were selected for either mathematics (22) or science (21).

As part of the programme verifiers were required to look at learner profiles submitted to cluster moderation events and the work of three randomly selected learners.

Year 1 – actions

Important lessons were learned from Year 1 and these were used to further develop the verification programme for Year 2 (2015–16).

The initial draft report (July 2015) identified tasks that needed to be undertaken by the consortia, during the autumn term 2015, to enable them to consistently support their schools and clusters, in strengthening and developing teacher assessment arrangements. The work resulted in the publication of the following guidance documentation.

- A brief guide to assessment in schools.
- *Moderating teacher assessment – Guidance for schools and clusters 2015/2016.*
- *Moderating teacher assessment – Subject specific guidance for schools and clusters 2015/2016.*

Year 1 – summary of findings

In many instances verifiers agreed with the judgements of schools. However, there was variance between key stages and subjects. They also found that the quality of evidence used to support teacher assessment was variable. In the best examples, learners' work represented full curriculum coverage and teacher assessment had sufficient detail to support the levels awarded. However, in both primary and secondary schools the work of a few learners had insufficient evidence for the verifier to be able to agree the level.

Year 2 – programme

As part of the contract there were a number of planned changes to the delivery of the programme for Year 2. These included:

- a change of subject focus to: English, Welsh and Welsh second language
- an increase in sample size to 15 per cent of schools at each key stage

- the implementation of a small proportion (10 per cent) of visits to cluster moderation meetings.

In light of lessons learned from the delivery of the programme in Year 1, the Partnership Board recommended to the Welsh Government Contract Board:

- an increase in the proportion of cluster visits to 20 per cent, with the school visit sample reduced accordingly to 10 per cent, which in effect remained the same as Year 1.

This was agreed and subsequently implemented.

Year 2 – visit summary

A total of 59 verifiers were deployed to 154 schools and 43 clusters. Of the schools:

- 88 were English-medium Key Stage 2 settings
- 42 were Welsh-medium Key Stage 2 settings
- 16 were English-medium Key Stage 3 settings
- 8 were Welsh-medium Key Stage 3 settings.

Of the clusters:

- 16 were English-medium – English
- 14 were English-medium – Welsh second language
- 7 were Welsh-medium – Welsh
- 6 were Welsh-medium – English.

In all schools verification focused on one subject, which was randomly selected for the individual school, but balanced according to the proportion of settings in Wales. As part of the programme of school visits, verifiers were required to look at the two learner profiles submitted to cluster moderation events and the work of three randomly selected learners.

Year 2 – main initial findings

Cluster moderation

- An improvement in the organisation of cluster meetings was evident. Nearly all meetings were chaired by a headteacher or senior leader and were managed effectively, with dates agreed well in advance. However, in a few cases, insufficient time was allocated to enable the moderation of all profiles for each school in the cluster.
- A local authority (LA) and/or a consortium representative attended the majority of cluster meetings visited. In most cases, this was to fulfil the LA's statutory responsibility in relation to assessment. In a very few cases, there was confusion about whether their role is solely monitoring or advisory.
- The consortia guidance for schools to use an individual learner's book, rather than selected samples of work, provided participants with a broader range of evidence on

which to base their judgement. However, there were still inconsistencies in the application of this new approach.

- In a minority of instances, there was variation in the use of teacher commentary, both within and between consortia. In a few cases, this resulted in insufficient information being available to support a best-fit judgement. Teachers' commentary did not always provide the context for the activity or fully identify how the learner had demonstrated the characteristics of the level awarded. There was however, evidence of increased challenge from primary to secondary colleagues, particularly in relation to work at Level 5.
- Many clusters employed a range of strategies to provide online access to audio and video evidence, in order to support judgements for oracy and reading. These systems improved the range of primary evidence available. However, not all the evidence presented at cluster meetings was sufficient in both range and quality to support accurate judgements for oracy, and to a lesser extent reading.
- A few clusters uploaded complete learner profiles to a secure website before the meeting. While this allowed live access to evidence, concerns were raised by a few teachers, regarding impact on teacher workload.
- A very few headteachers commented on the need for an independent view where there was disagreement.
- Nearly all clusters provided a general written feedback report. Most of these reports included recommendations for the whole cluster, however only a minority provided detailed feedback to individual schools.
- While there is a statutory requirement for schools to implement the determinations and decisions of the cluster meeting(s), in a very few instances where there was disagreement, there was no evidence available to confirm subsequent compliance.

School verification

The sufficiency and quality of evidence used to support teacher assessment has improved since year one of the programme. However, variation still exists between individual schools. In the best examples, the range of evidence provided to justify a level are supported by teacher annotation, which is sufficiently detailed to fully support the judgement.

In both primary and secondary schools, nearly all profiles verified had sufficient evidence for the verifier to be able to confirm the judgement of the school. There were very few instances where the verifier disagreed with the judgements of the school.

Please note that it is not possible to make any direct comparison with data from the 2015 programme, due to the change in subjects verified.

- For Key Stage 2 – English, most learners' levels were agreed at both Levels 4 and 5.
- For Key Stage 2 – Welsh, most learners' levels were agreed at Level 4 and many agreed at Level 5.
- For Key Stage 2 – Welsh second language, many learners' levels were agreed at Level 4 and most at Level 5.
- For Key Stage 3 – English, most learners' levels were agreed at both Levels 5 and 6.

- For Key Stage 3 – Welsh, all learners' levels were agreed at Levels 5 and 6.
- For Key Stage 3 – Welsh second language, most learners' levels were agreed at Level 5 and many at Level 6.

While, in most cases verifiers confirmed that there was sufficient evidence to justify the level awarded, in a few schools there was insufficient range and quality of evidence to support the judgements for oracy, and to a lesser extent reading. In nearly all the schools verified, best-fit principles were applied effectively.

Where judgements were not agreed this was because the verifier's judgements were either 1 level above or 1 level below that of the school (L+1 / L-1) or where there was insufficient evidence (IE) enable a secure judgment to be made.

For primary schools the reasons for lack of agreement were: Insufficient evidence (8.1%), disagreement at Level+1 (1.0%) and Level-1 (1.8%)

For secondary schools the reasons for lack of agreement were: Insufficient evidence (7.8%), disagreement at Level+1 (0%) and Level-1 (1.8%).

Recommendations

If the ultimate aim is to improve the consistency, reliability and validity of teacher assessment the STAP programme needs to change from the original specification from Year 3. Further visits to school and clusters will only generate the same outcomes as Years 1 and 2 of the programme. The Welsh Government and regional consortia should instead work collaboratively to support and develop teacher assessment.

It is still possible to introduce a national system of verification but it must form part of a wider programme of change, working closely with the Successful Futures and pioneer schools' programmes. There are a number of actions that will need to be undertaken collectively. Firstly, teacher assessment must become everyone's business.

- The status of teacher assessment needs to be raised.
- Teacher assessment needs to feature prominently in initial teacher education and training, as well as induction for newly qualified teachers.
- Teacher assessment must feature prominently in the Estyn framework.
- There is a need to ensure that the principles and purpose of assessment are fully understood by all teachers.
- Teachers' skills need to be further developed, through a national programme of mandatory training.
- Legislation needs to be reviewed to ensure it underpins and supports all curriculum development, in so far as they relate to teacher assessment.

The consortia need to ensure that:

- good quality guidance materials and training programmes are available to all members of the profession, including supply teachers and teaching assistants
- they liaise with each other so that a national system of moderation is created through: effective moderation within schools, within clusters, across clusters, regionally, and ultimately across Wales
- processes follow an agreed national timetable
- there is clarity about the work that should be taken by teachers to a cluster meeting
- their role in the process, along with that of the local authorities, is understood by all
- assessment is integral to everything they do, so there are clear and consistent messages to the profession on how to ensure effective and accurate teacher assessment.

Schools need to:

- ensure effective leadership of assessment
- ensure a 'common language' of assessment is understood and used by all
- understand the principles and purposes of assessment, and how they relate to their own context and needs
- place learners at the heart of the process
- have an agreed understanding of the need for assessment, the information required, and how assessment information should be used, both within and between schools

- have in place effective internal systems for standardising and moderating learners' work
- provide parents/carers with meaningful information about their child's progress.

Welsh Government need to:

- make the necessary legislative and policy changes to ensure there is a clear accountability structure and that legislation underpins and supports planned developments
- make clear the statutory responsibilities of each key stakeholder
- ensure that any work on assessment is integral to Successful Futures and the work of pioneer schools.

Appendix: actions and recommendations from Year 1

The programme report to the Welsh Government at the end of Year 1 gave a number of actions and recommendations. The tables below provide a high level summary of the completion status of each action.

The programme

Action	Status
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Revise the training programme for verifiers in order to define more clearly its scope and content.	Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Develop the online system, to ensure that it supports the administration of the programme, organises verifier workflow, and has robust data reporting tools.	Completed, but impact to be evaluated further
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Strengthen the quality assurance processes at all levels of the programme, to increase confidence in the accuracy of all judgements made.	Completed, but outcomes to be reported in external evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Work with the Welsh Government to further refine the school sampling methodology to ensure improved targeting of schools.	Completed

Regional consortia

Action	Status
Use the findings of the report to inform the programme of professional development to be provided to their schools, in order to support teacher assessment within their region.	Completed (for 2015–16) but ongoing
Use the programme's documentation when recruiting verifiers, in order to clearly communicate the role, responsibilities, time commitment and financial arrangements.	Completed

Welsh Government

Consideration should continue to raise the profile of assessment, so that:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• all key stakeholders give assessment a high priority	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• it is integral to the training and development of those new to the profession.	Ongoing