

Assessment Case Study – The ‘APP’ at Sandylands Community Primary School, Morecambe

Background

The introduction of the new national curriculum and the demise of levels have been seized as an opportunity for innovation by the headteacher at Sandylands school. Change has led to a sharper focus on the needs of learners whilst ensuring the curriculum is broad and balanced. National requirements are rightly seen as crucial elements of the wider school curriculum; however, they are not considered restrictive nor allowed to limit thinking in relation to child-centred learning.



Curriculum

The curriculum design principles mean that it :

- Is competency-based,
- focuses on values
- incorporates local, national and global dimensions

The structure is as follows:

1. A range of subjects divided into a series of curriculum ‘strands’, ‘Strands’ are derived both from the national curriculum and the school’s own curriculum aims and principles
2. The ‘strands’ are translated into ‘competences’ that express how the learner will be successful in applying their learning
3. Teachers use the strands and competences to plan ‘threads’ or activities through which learning takes place

Assessment

The approach to assessment is not bolt on and the principles have been developed in alignment with the curriculum:

- Assessment should relate directly to learning outcomes rather than to numbers or grades
- Assessment should focus on the competences ie the ability to apply learning

- Learning and assessment should be personalised so that all learners (regardless of ability) face appropriate challenges and are motivated to make progress
- Assessment should focus on the entire school curriculum of which the National Curriculum is only part
- Effective formative assessment should routinely happen in lessons on a daily basis
- Learners should have an active role in their own assessment

The App

The school has developed and is now implementing an exciting app that has been designed in accordance with the above principles. It works as follows:

1. Learners use iPads to access the appropriate thread for the lesson and engage in the learning activity as directed by the teacher
2. Learners self-assess against the competencies using the iPads according to a four point scale: **too easy; got it; working on it; too difficult**
3. Once learners believe they have got it (or found it too easy), they take a photograph using the iPads and so build a personal portfolio of evidence
4. Teachers use the live self-assessment feedback to ensure all learners make progress by guiding them to appropriately challenging or enabling next steps. These include:
 - a more difficult thread;
 - the next strand or competence in the sequence;
 - seeking support from the teacher, support assistant or classmate to ensure they do get it;
 - going back to an earlier strand so they can make up gaps in prior learning.

Impact

There are strongly positive early signs as the app is rolled out from the pilot to the implementation phase.

- Learners are enjoying using the app and making good progress
- Learners focus on learning rather than tasks
- Learners are motivated to push themselves to higher levels of achievement
- Learners with SEN are achieving at higher than expected levels in some areas of the curriculum
- Parents report the value of the conversations about learning that they are having with their children
- Teachers find the app easy to use and appreciate the learning conversations its use entails and the accelerated progress learners make as a result