

TRACK AND ACT

If you really want to get the most from your data, then 'digging deep', asking searching questions and taking positive action is a must, says Alison Cooper...

So, the new term's in full swing and the tracking of progress and attainment is once again under way. But what has been done with all the mass of assessment data gathered at the end of the summer term? How is it being used to make a difference to all learners in your school and drive up standards?

Ultimately, making that difference sits firmly in the classroom with consistently high quality teaching and learning. However, it's the analysis of that summative data, whilst maintaining a continuous overview of effective tracking, that will have an impact across the whole school. The key is to identify the focus group(s) in each class and to use the most appropriate time-limited intervention: in other words, to 'track and act.'

Tracking

Most schools now have pretty sophisticated tracking systems, but the assessment data within them is only the first part of the story. It may ask the questions, but it

doesn't give the answers. The term 'rigorous analysis' is common currency, but this should go beyond attainment and progress over time. The foci below might be useful prompts for subject leaders to support discussion with all colleagues.

- Does the combined English and mathematics

result reflect the individual English and mathematics results? For example: 77% of Y6 pupils achieved Level 4+ English and 75% achieved Level 4+ in mathematics, yet the combined English and mathematics Level 4+ result is 67%. Which children did not achieve Level 4 in both subjects? The

reasons for this need to be explored.

- Who are the underachieving pupils? Are there differences between their standards and progress? Are there specific groups of underachieving pupils e.g. those learning English as an additional language or more able pupils (who may often be overlooked)? What could be the reasons for their underachievement?
- Is there a boy/girl difference in reading, writing or mathematics? Is this a whole school trend or in specific year groups? What could account for it?

Acting

It's that all-important 'So what?' that can often become squeezed within the demands of a busy classroom and school. A new Ofsted Framework will be introduced in January 2012 and, as we know, a new curriculum is on the horizon. So, with reading high on the Government agenda let's consider what acting might involve if your data shows a weakness in reading. ➤



1 Are teachers teaching reading?

First and foremost, are teachers teaching the breadth of skills children need to become enthusiastic and fluent readers who gain real meaning from text? This requires achieving a good balance of teaching a rigorous phonics programme in addition to developing children's language and reading comprehension. There is plenty of good phonics teaching happening in Reception and KS1 but how much time is given to children really getting under the skin of a text? In order to acquire those higher order comprehension skills, children need time to explore text in depth; to formulate their own responses and to re-evaluate their views in response to those of others'. All the above are, of course, complementary to writing. When and how does this happen? Are children confident to engage in dialogic talk? How are teachers enabling this to develop? Most analyses of reading comprehension tests flag up Assessment Focus 3 (inference and deduction) as an area for development but does a published reading comprehension exercise (which can often be seen as the solution) really develop a deep understanding? Practical activities such as visualisation, predictions, story mapping, drama and role play and 'Tell me' response frames will all help to deepen children's reading and to make learning fun.



“ Unless pupils can read well, they cannot access the rest of the curriculum, nor can they succeed in later life. Improving standards of reading is therefore an absolute priority

OFSTED (PROPOSALS FOR INSPECTION ARRANGEMENTS FROM JAN 2012)

2 Are children grouped for reading?

If so, are the groupings fluid to take account of pupils' variable rates of progress and need? All too often groupings remain static, but even if children are performing at the same National Curriculum level they may have vastly different learning needs. Is

there an effective balance of whole class, group, paired and individual work?

3 Is there early intervention in direct response to assessment?

This might be a short series of one-to-one opportunities or tightly focused group work within the whole class context and may not need to be a structured intervention programme. Alternatively, teachers might be using specific intervention programmes e.g. Early Literacy Support, Better Reading Partners. If so, how is progress tracked both short-term and over a longer period? Did participation in a specific

programme enable children to get back on track? If not, why not? Through the school's provision map, are Wave 2 interventions being tracked within and through all year groups?

4 Are all teachers and TAs confident to teach reading?

INSET for improving reading might well be needed, including phonics for those working in KS2 to support children who have gaps in phonic knowledge. Some teachers may need support to broaden their range of teaching strategies to deepen children's understanding of text - practice transfer through coaching or lesson study may prove invaluable.

A point to note: If you are a KS1 school, be aware that the Government announced that matched-funding of up to £3000 will be provided for schools to buy systematic, synthetic phonics products and training from an approved list.

5 Does the school's environment promote a love of reading?

Take a walk around the school - and it's worth doing this as a staff. Are you motivated and stimulated as a reader by what you see and what you can experience? How is reading promoted across the curriculum and within the community? A quick audit and action may not be costly, and could make all the difference.

Only by these questions do we help colleagues evaluate and enable them not only to track but also to act, thus giving every child has the best possible opportunity to become the best possible learner.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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