



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority

Evaluation of the assessing pupils' progress in year 1 pilot project 2007/8

Final report

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Please note that all quotes used in this report came from teachers and headteachers unless otherwise attributed.

Executive summary

This is a report on the assessing pupils' progress (APP) in key stage 1 pilot project run by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and participating local authorities from September 2007 to July 2008. The report draws on the responses to teacher and headteacher questionnaires, feedback provided by participating local authorities and observation of a series of meetings for schools.

The use of APP has already been piloted in key stage 2 and key stage 3 and many schools and local authorities are now implementing the approach with the support of the National Strategies. This pilot has explored the implications for its use within key stage 1, and more particularly in year 1, and attempted to identify specific issues associated with the use of APP in the early stages of the national curriculum.

This report refers to some features that were specific to the pilot phase and have informed the wider development of APP. These features will not apply to the APP approach when used by schools beyond the pilot (see annex on page 38).

Organisation of the pilot

QCA worked in collaboration with eight local authorities. The number of key stage 1 schools involved was 51. Initial training and the production of all project materials were the responsibility of a central team at QCA; local authorities selected schools and teachers and provided local support throughout the year. There were variations in the pattern of support depending on local needs and the objectives that each local authority hoped to achieve as a result of taking part in the pilot.

Impact of APP

Feedback from teachers, headteachers and local authority staff indicates a very positive impact on the quality of teacher assessment. Most teachers considered that the use of APP had improved their ability to identify gaps in pupils' learning and also reported that they found it easy to make the link to their planning so that APP assessment outcomes could inform next steps in teaching and learning. There were positive comments about how APP complemented the new frameworks. They also felt that they were better able to identify 'naturally occurring' assessment opportunities and their questionnaire responses showed a growing trend in the use of observational assessment. This was welcomed by many as an opportunity to improve classroom practice in year 1, building on the strengths in assessment from the early years foundation stage (EYFS).

A number of teachers and headteachers reported that they were intending to replace at least some of their existing assessments with APP, as this would give them a more accurate and holistic picture of pupil attainment.

Headteachers and local authority staff emphasised the improvement in teachers' confidence in their own ability to make accurate assessments without the need to rely on a test or assessment task and said that teachers felt empowered by this. Local authorities were clear that the use of APP promoted more sharing of responsibility for attainment and progress across key stage 1.

Indirectly, the impact of APP can be seen in the plans of all the participating local authorities to extend the use of APP at key stage 1 into more schools from the autumn, and at least two of the authorities are intending to use APP materials to support their moderation of end of key stage 1 assessments.

Challenges

The challenges identified by the teachers taking part in this pilot were largely similar to those faced whenever APP is introduced, namely:

- managing the assessment process
- developing expertise and familiarity
- recognising sound evidence to underpin assessment judgements
- using detailed assessments from a focus group of pupils to inform teacher assessment.

There were also some specific challenges for teachers in year 1. Finding time to plan for and carry out assessment, particularly observational assessment, and then to review evidence periodically and liaise with colleagues was just as challenging in key stage 1 as for any other teacher. However, the basic elements of the process, particularly the concept that assessment opportunities do not have to be structured or formal, was far more familiar to the teachers in this pilot. Many had experience of working in EYFS or commented that APP was consistent with their approach to statutory assessment at the end of key stage 1. Most found the review of evidence to derive an assessment outcome relatively easy, once they had assimilated the advice on the APP flowcharts about making a judgement across assessment focuses. Two factors supported this:

- familiarity with the AF criteria and
- access to a wide range of sound evidence.

Both of these were felt by teachers to be improved with time and practice. In contrast to the key stage 2 pilot, many of the teachers used both English and mathematics and did not seem to find this an issue.

For some teachers, use of APP revealed that they needed better or more varied evidence and this has promoted concern over their classroom provision. Local authorities have been aware of this

through their support activities and taking account of this, for example, in plans for continuing professional development (CPD).

Within key stage 1, many teachers have seemed comfortable with the idea of developing their teacher assessment expertise through detailed assessments for a focus group of pupils; they see this as an approach which they can adapt and develop into a manageable system for carrying out teacher assessments for all pupils. Others feel that detailed assessment for every pupil is needed in order to make the most of the diagnostic information available and to ensure that all pupils are treated fairly. In this latter group, opinion is split between whether this will be manageable, with some thinking that it cannot be done and others confident that once the criteria are 'second nature', they will be able to manage. There were often comments that this would be no more onerous than some of the existing activities around monitoring progress against lists of objectives that they carry out now.

There was consensus that when APP is introduced it should not be as an add-on to every other type of assessment currently in place. The views of teachers and local authority staff is that the introduction of APP needs to be properly planned as the basis for teacher assessment and that it should be in place across the key stage/school to make it workable.

Some challenges unique to year 1 have been identified which are related to being able to demonstrate progress at the very earliest stages of learning, when children are learning very rapidly but often with some areas of learning below level 1. Many of the teachers were used to managing assessment for some of their pupils through the early years foundation stage profile and these teachers could see the links between some aspects of the profile and the assessment focus criteria. Others were not using the profile within year 1 but other local systems or the P scales, and for them, adopting APP was much more challenging. By the end of the project both groups seemed to accept that APP and the early years foundation stage profile could both be used in year 1, but they are very anxious to have access to manageable materials which support their assessment of pupils working partly just into level 1 and partly on the profile, so that they can show attainment and progress for them too.

Realisation of the pilot aims

Local authorities and their participating schools came into the pilot with a range of specific objectives, many of which were shared. The evidence has been used to evaluate the extent to which these were achieved.

Improving teacher assessment was a key focus across local authorities and there was ample evidence that this was being achieved. Supporting effective transition practice, both into key stage 1 and between key stage 1 and key stage 2, was an issue of importance for several authorities. Moreover, observation of cross key stage meetings as well as feedback from local authorities, suggests that APP can give teachers a 'common language' in which to discuss attainment and

progress. This enables them to debate and challenge each other's assessments, and meetings which have brought teachers from adjacent years together have shown much more common understanding of standards for the relevant national curriculum level.

Recommendations for future

Some key recommendations have been developed for consideration when introducing or extending the use of APP.

1. Any introduction of APP needs to be made with the full support of the headteacher in order to be effective.

In the pilot some of the local authorities made arrangements for headteachers to be very closely involved in all the project activities. This proved highly effective and helped to ensure the commitment to securing sufficient time and resources for the teachers and pupils to gain maximum benefit from using APP.

2. The varied 'starting points' in schools need to be taken into account when introducing APP and relevant support will need to be made available locally.

The ease with which schools and teachers can adopt APP will depend upon how well it fits with existing practice and the extent to which the principles of assessment for learning are in place. Evidence suggests that APP can trigger improvement in both these areas but that this is more likely to happen where support is available, otherwise teachers may become discouraged.

3. Teachers and schools new to APP need to be allowed time to develop their skills in assessment and embed their knowledge of the assessment criteria and how these are evidenced by pupils.

APP is not a 'quick fix' in key stage 1, even though it has much in common with the approach to end of key stage assessment. Teachers need time for initial training, for practice, for collaboration with colleagues on range and quality of evidence and for moderation to check that judgements are being made consistently. If any of these do not receive sufficient time, then benefits may not be fully realised.

4. Realistic timescales for introducing and extending APP are needed to ensure that teachers remain committed and are not discouraged.

All the feedback suggests that APP is often best introduced in manageable chunks and built up in stages, for example by beginning English with writing before reading, or Ma2, then the other mathematics attainment targets. Encouragement from teachers already familiar with APP was recommended by headteachers in the pilot, as was being open and honest about the time and effort required as well as the benefits.

This does not mean that challenge should be avoided; the pilot local authorities often had very high expectations of their teachers and, given the right atmosphere and support, their progress and enthusiasm was very evident.

5. Consider how best to support teachers in the assessment of pupils in year 1 who are only just beginning to access the national curriculum, using a combination of APP criteria and early learning goals.

In developing APP training and support materials for key stage 1, some thought should be given to how best to demonstrate the integration of the two assessment approaches in year 1.

6. Content of the initial introductory training should include a clear presentation of the end-to-end process for APP teacher assessment in the classroom and model the successful use of APP as a whole school assessment system.

Time allowed for training should be enough to allow equal emphasis on all the key aspects of APP:

- identifying evidence
- reviewing evidence to make an assessment
- using assessment outcomes to inform planning
- how APP fits within a school's overall assessment system.

Giving the full picture helps teachers to get APP into context and see that it is very much more than a checklist of criteria.

1. Introduction

From October 2007 to July 2008, QCA has been taking part in a collaborative pilot project with local authorities and schools, exploring the use of APP (assessing pupils' progress) teacher assessment in English and mathematics in year 1. QCA, with the support of the National Strategies, has already conducted a number of pilot projects to develop APP materials for key stages 2 and 3 in English and mathematics and is currently working on the development of materials in science and foundation subjects. Materials for English and mathematics at key stages 2 and 3 have already been published for use in schools and the National Strategies are working on a national programme to rollout the key stage 2 materials to all schools from September 2008 (<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primaryframework/assessment/app>).

For QCA, the aim of the year 1 pilot was to see how the materials would 'fit' in the context of the earliest stages of the national curriculum, and it was also an opportunity to support the development of teacher assessment practice in year 1. As part of the changes to statutory national curriculum assessment at the end of key stage 1, significant investment has been made in developing teacher assessment in year 2 and teacher assessment in early years is supported by the foundation stage profile (FSP). To date, however, little attention has been given to teacher assessment in year 1. The development team at QCA produced draft assessment criteria (assessment guidelines) at levels 1 and 2 for use in the pilot, as well as training and guidance materials.

A central feature of this pilot was the collaboration between the development team and the participating local authorities, whose role was to support schools in the use of APP. In some ways, it provided an opportunity for the local authorities taking part to model how support might be offered to schools as they 'roll out' the use of APP in key stage 2 or key stage 3. Each local authority came into the project with specific aims, tailored around their existing needs and priorities for assessment. These are described in the next section.

The evaluation of the pilot has been carried out using a variety of methods. These include:

- observation of national training events, including local authority briefings
- attendance at a range of local authority-led activities for schools over three terms and all eight local authorities
- analysis of teacher questionnaires in February (91 respondents) and July (79 respondents)
- analysis of headteacher questionnaires in July (33 respondents)
- observation of two local authority review meetings organised at QCA.

Interim feedback has been provided on a termly basis for the QCA project team to inform materials development and for local authorities at the two review meetings held in January and June.

This report brings together findings and reflections from the full range of evaluation activities during the year.

2. Organisation of the pilot project

Apart from the three initial training sessions, which were delivered by the project team, the organisation and running of the pilot, including liaison with schools, was the responsibility of the local authorities. Each local authority set out its individual aims for the pilot in its initial applications to the project team. The table below gives a brief summary of each local authority's aims and the type of support it offered to its schools.

Table 1 – Aims for local authorities in the pilot project

Local authority	Focus for the pilot	Special features	Activities to support schools
Cornwall	<p>Improve quality of assessment in KS1</p> <p>Promote effective transition from Infant to Junior schools</p>	<p>Focus on Infant only schools</p> <p>Local authority provided full funding for partner Junior schools to use APP KS2 materials as part of pilot</p> <p>Work on relationship between APP and P scales outside project</p> <p>All schools new to APP</p>	<p>Follow up to central training session</p> <p>Individual visits programme</p> <p>Paired meetings for partner schools as well as cross local authority meetings</p> <p>Feedback meeting for headteachers at close of project</p>
Coventry	<p>Improve quality of assessment in year 1</p> <p>Strengthen transition from foundation stage to year 1</p>	<p>All schools new to APP</p> <p>Liaison and cross local authority moderation with neighbouring non-pilot local authority (Birmingham)</p>	<p>Individual visits programme</p> <p>Termly moderation events for all teachers in the pilot</p>
Hillingdon	<p>Improve quality of assessment in year 1</p> <p>Promote consistent assessment practice from foundation stage through to KS2</p>	<p>All schools were involved in the APP KS2 pilot so already using materials and school processes in place</p> <p>High expectation that participating schools would be able to build on experience at KS2 and extend to KS1</p>	<p>Twilight 'drop-ins' for advice on evidence collection, etc</p> <p>Moderation meetings (separated by subject) in autumn and spring using the same model as already in place for KS2</p>
Kent	<p>Link to local authority objectives around assessment for learning</p> <p>Year 1 teachers expressed need for better guidance on assessment</p>	<p>1 additional non-pilot school funded by local authority</p> <p>Most schools elected to work with mathematics only</p> <p>All schools new to APP</p>	<p>Termly meetings for participating teachers – headteachers invited</p> <p>Individual contact maintained with schools throughout</p>

<p>North Yorkshire</p>	<p>Reduce emphasis on test-based assessment</p> <p>Promote effective transition across all key stages in context of complex local authority organisation</p>	<p>Schools worked in geographical pairs</p> <p>Involvement of small rural schools, often with mixed age classes</p> <p>Inclusion of headteachers in all levels of activity</p> <p>All schools new to APP</p>	<p>Support given for work in school pairs</p> <p>Three local authority events for all schools for feedback and moderation – headteachers always included</p> <p>Individual contact and follow-up between meetings</p>
<p>Solihull</p>	<p>Develop coherent, consistent approach to teacher assessment, building on work done in the KS2 pilot</p> <p>Improve transition into and out of KS1</p> <p>Build moderation capacity among teachers</p>	<p>Termly staged approach to taking on APP: writing, then reading, then mathematics</p> <p>three schools already using APP at KS2; three schools new to APP</p>	<p>Preparatory local training for all participating teachers in line with staged introduction</p> <p>Termly review/moderation meetings</p> <p>Pilot review with headteachers</p> <p>Training arrangements made for teaching assistants</p>
<p>Southampton</p>	<p>Ensuring consistent approach to teacher assessment and consistency of assessment judgements across all key stages</p> <p>Raising achievement</p>	<p>Work for pilot combined with local authorities' continuing involvement with KS2 pilot and their own early rollout of APP in KS2</p> <p>3 schools already using APP at KS2; 4 schools new to APP</p>	<p>Termly update and review meetings with specific sessions for year 1 teachers</p> <p>Visits and follow-up support for individual schools</p> <p>Subject specific support</p>
<p>Worcestershire</p>	<p>Improve assessment practice in year 1</p> <p>Promote effective transition and consistent assessment practice</p> <p>Develop APP and moderation experience in local authority</p>	<p>All schools new to APP</p> <p>Expectation that schools will adopt approaches to moderation similar to those in schools where APP already established</p> <p>Direct involvement of large number of local authority staff in moderation activities across both KS1 and KS2</p>	<p>Separate termly review and moderation meetings organised by subject</p>

Initial training for participating teachers was organised at three venues between 5 and 12 October. Schools were invited to send two teachers plus the headteacher to the training day, so that headteachers could develop an awareness of the APP assessment process. Teachers and schools selected their focus subject(s) in consultation with their local authority. In their responses to the summer questionnaire, 25 teachers said that they were using APP for reading, writing and mathematics, 28 were using it for mathematics only, two for reading only and seven for writing only. Other combinations were reading and mathematics (two), reading and writing (nine), writing and mathematics (one).

Each teacher was expected to choose a focus group of approximately six pupils for whom detailed APP assessments in the selected subject would be made (see annex on page 38). Assessment requires periodic review of a range of evidence at appropriate intervals. There were no set times for the periodic review of assessment and no assessment outcomes were collected centrally. Timing of the assessments was driven by the arrangements within school and the need to comply with any local authority arrangements for external meetings. The vast majority of teachers indicated that they chose six pupils for their focus group, generally to represent the range of ability across their class. Some used the outcomes from the FSP to help inform their choices and often tried to have a gender balance. Others referred to pragmatic considerations like trying to select good attenders or those about whom little was known. Most teachers seem to have made their APP assessments on a termly basis.

The importance of headteacher involvement was stressed from the outset by the QCA team, based on experience in previous APP pilots. This message was heavily reinforced through some of the local authority support activities which included headteachers (see Table 1 above) but, in other cases, there was no requirement for heads to involve themselves directly in assessment/moderation activities other than the initial training.

All local authorities held meetings which required teachers to present/discuss assessment evidence with colleagues. Although these were often referred to as 'moderation' meetings and all included some elements of activities which characterise moderation, for example the presentation of evidence and the challenge to colleagues' assessment judgements, they were often quite informal with very varied amounts of time for discussion, and consequent effect on the depth of interrogation of evidence. In some, the clear focus was on the quality of evidence presented and its implication for teachers, learning and assessment rather than on the level judgements made for their pupils. It was up to the local authority to decide the focus of these meetings to meet the perceived needs of their schools and teachers and with regard to their own aims and approaches for the pilot.

3. Evaluation findings – Impact of APP

This section explores the impact of APP from the perspective of:

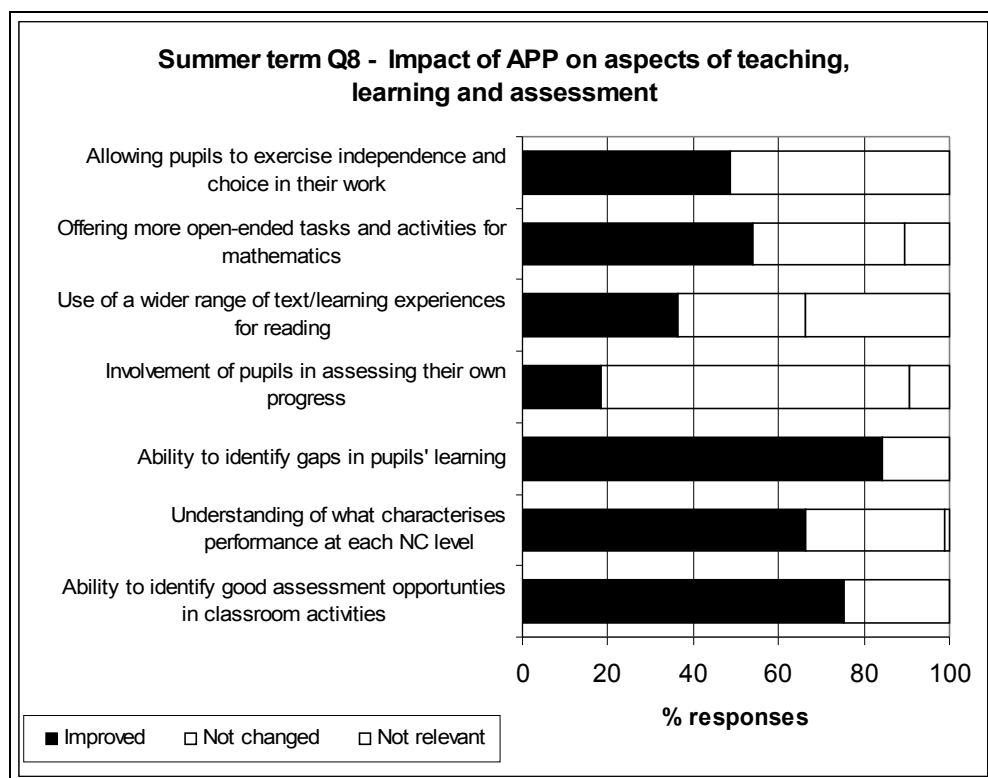
- teachers
- headteachers
- local authorities.

The information in this section draws both on responses to the questionnaires (included in appendices 1–3) and from observations at a range of meetings.

3.1 Teacher views on impact

From early on in the project, teachers considered that APP was giving them useful information about their pupils' learning; 90 per cent of the teachers completing questionnaires in February considered this to be the case. In the summer term questionnaire, teachers were asked to consider seven aspects of teaching, learning and assessment, and in each case to say whether or not that aspect had been improved by APP (see Chart 1).

Chart 1 Impact of APP – teacher views



Most teachers (84 per cent) were clear that APP had improved their ability to identify gaps in pupils' learning. This was also the most frequently offered comment at meetings when teachers were asked about the impact of APP. Seventy-five per cent felt that APP had improved their ability to identify good assessment opportunities in everyday classroom activities and 66 per cent their understanding of the characteristics of performance at each national curriculum level. Teachers

were less likely to consider that APP had improved the involvement of pupils in assessing their own progress – only 18 per cent said that this had been improved by APP. There were some comments on questionnaires that this was already in place prior to the pilot. There is some indication from the responses to the questionnaires that teachers felt that they were now offering a wider range of texts/ learning experiences for reading (36 per cent improved; 30 per cent not changed) or that they were now offering more open-ended tasks for mathematics (54 per cent improved; 36 per cent not changed).

The impact of APP on evidence used for assessment was explored directly in both the spring and summer questionnaires. In spring, 36 per cent of teachers selected 'finding evidence for the range of assessment focuses' as the single most challenging aspect of carrying out their APP assessments (the most frequently selected response). In summer, anxiety about this aspect of APP appeared to be much reduced, with collections of evidence being rated as manageable by 60 per cent of teachers. When asked directly if the kind of evidence they used to assess children's progress had changed as a result of APP, 63 per cent said that it had. Asked to provide some details of what these changes were, the most frequent references were to use of a greater range of evidence (including for other 'subjects'), better use of incidental opportunities or observations (related to less use of 'set piece' assessments) and to better/more focused/more creative use of the available evidence. A number of teachers mentioned that they were now promoting independent work to make sure that they would have a suitable source of assessment evidence. In the context of year 1 this was not necessarily written work but work done without too much teacher intervention and done 'at a distance' from the relevant teaching.

In open-ended responses, teachers gave examples of the type of evidence that they were using in the summer term. Table 2 shows the responses in descending order of popularity.

Table 2 Types of evidence used by teachers – summer term

Evidence	Number of references
Written work, books (formal or informal)	58
Observations – general	52
Including: on sticky notes	(14)
by teaching assistant	(9)
in role play and on carpet	(2)
of outdoor activities	(1)
Photos	24
Independent reading records/sessions	20
Discussion	19
Guided reading	17
Including: text marking	(1)
miscue analysis	(1)
Independent work in practical maths	14
Annotated plans and evaluation of lessons	11
From other subjects	9
Child-initiated role play	8
Questioning/pupil interview	8
Plenaries	7
Tests/tasks	6
Photocopied whiteboards	6
Video	5
Mental/oral starters	5
Phonics records	5
Class/group work	4
'Talk for writing'/shared writing	4
Sound recording	3
Tracking folders/objective tick-sheets	2
Extended writing	1
Jottings sheets	1
Big writing book	1
Assessment and review lessons	1

Where teachers stated that the kind of evidence used had not changed, they often said that they were working in mixed-age classes and that they had already been making use of observational assessment as part of their practice. For those not used to observational assessment, there were some uncomfortable moments:

'I put on my plans when I am going to be watching what they do – in case someone walks in and thinks I'm not teaching! Sometimes I feel a bit guilty but it's so important to step back and APP gives you the licence to do it – not objectives-led, more the whole view.'

Most teachers really welcomed the opportunity to bring best practice, in terms of observational assessment, which they were aware of in the foundation stage, into their year 1 classrooms.

There was evidence from teachers and local authority staff at meetings that reviewing the evidence available to them with other colleagues had made teachers question the nature of curricular

provision in their classrooms. In one local authority, for example, the lack of evidence of any independent work for mathematics had made it obvious that year 1 was offering children very little in the way of child-initiated activity. At the first round of meetings, individual teachers were occasionally dismayed by the difference between the evidence that they had brought and that provided by colleagues teaching pupils at the same levels of ability. In several cases, these same teachers appeared transformed at the final meetings in the summer term, confidently sharing examples of work and able to take full part in the debate around evidence and assessment outcomes. Local authorities were generally sensitive to these situations and time in meetings was used to suggest or explore more creative activities that could yield rich evidence. In most instances, teachers reacted positively and enthusiastically after the initial shock, seeing this as an opportunity to improve the quality of learning in their classrooms.

'We're moving to a topic-based approach – staff are really fired up about it. We can do this because you can use APP to check you still have the standard in the work.'

The impact of APP can also be measured by looking at the change over time in teachers' confidence in their own assessment judgements. In the spring and summer terms, the questionnaire asked teachers how confident they were that level judgements they made were accurate. In February, 15 per cent of teachers were very confident in the accuracy of their APP judgements and by summer this had risen to 26 per cent. By summer, 97 per cent of teachers were either reasonably or very confident in their ability to make accurate assessment judgements. A teacher in a mixed year 1/2 class referred to the fact that she will also be more confident in her assessments at the end of key stage 1.

'APP has been a very steep learning curve for me, especially as it's my first year of teaching. It has really benefited my teacher assessment and added to my own teaching/assessment strategies.'

Teachers had the opportunity to state any other benefits of APP and the most common theme in their responses was that APP formed the basis of a shared understanding with other teachers, teaching assistants and with colleagues in other schools – giving them a 'common language' with which to debate achievement and assess progress.

'[benefit was] the opportunity to talk with other practitioners and colleagues – professional dialogue.'

A particular feature of feedback in the summer terms was the strength of the relationship between APP assessment and planning. In February, this link between assessment outcomes and planning seemed less evident to teachers, with only 37 per cent of teachers indicating that they intended to make changes to their plans as a result of what they found. By summer this was identified by many teachers explicitly as a benefit 'assessment now embedded in planning' and is implicit in the fact that the ability to identify gaps in learning is the most frequently selected feature improved by APP. At a meeting in North Yorkshire, there was extensive discussion, when reviewing some evidence from a pupil apparently working at level 3, about how more able children can be 'pushed' in some

areas but left with significant gaps in their learning in others, which cause problems for them later. The view of the teachers was that using APP made this less of a possibility.

'Their misconceptions were the same no matter what level they were – now I can spend my time teaching them what they need to know.'

'It was sold as an assessment system, but more and more it's becoming a planning tool – planning aspects should have been more highlighted at the start!'

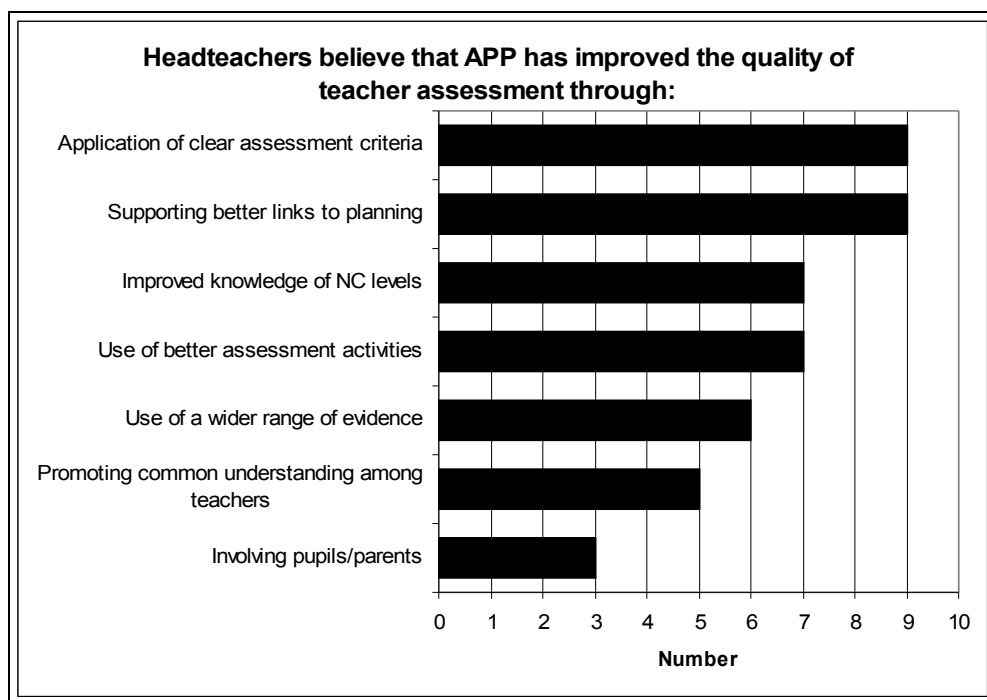
3.2 Headteacher views on impact

In their questionnaire, when headteachers were asked directly whether they considered that the use of APP had improved the quality of teacher assessment in year 1, 97 per cent (31) respondents said that it had. Respondents were invited to describe how it had been improved and their suggestions were coded (see Chart 2). The two most popular suggestions were:

- through the application of clear assessment criteria
- through supporting better links to planning.

Headteachers also felt that the use of APP had improved the knowledge that underpins sound assessment practice:

- knowing the characteristics of national curriculum levels and
- knowing what makes a 'good' assessment activity.

Chart 2 Headteacher views on the impact of APP on teacher assessment

There were also references to improvement in teacher assessment through the use of a wider range of evidence, common understanding among teachers (related to the use of clear assessment criteria and knowing how these criteria are related to level performance) and a very few mentioned better involvement of pupils and parents. While few headteachers referred to the use of APP with parents on the returned questionnaire, at review meetings several referred to the fact that the use of APP had meant that teachers were able to draw on more specific information on attainment and next steps in learning to inform their conversations with parents and their end-of-term reports.

Headteachers were also asked about the impact on classroom provision. Seventy per cent considered that their pupils were now experiencing a greater range of learning opportunities and 60 per cent believed that there were more opportunities for independent learning. Opinion was divided on whether APP had resulted in any change to the extent of pupils' involvement in their own assessment. Another question asked if headteachers had any evidence that pupils were making better progress and if so, to give brief details. Just under half of respondents felt pupils were making better progress and their responses tended to indicate a belief that pupils would progress more rapidly because their teachers now had a better grasp of considerations such as the next steps in learning. However, their detailed responses did not refer to any substantive evidence apart from:

'Children could talk to OFSTED inspectors about their work and where they needed to move on to next.'

'Less able children are moving on faster than expected.'

It is worth noting that despite the extensive tracking systems which are in place in schools, as recorded in response to other questions around existing assessment practice headteachers seemed

unable to draw on evidence of greater than expected progress, an analysis which should be supported by the use of their target setting and tracking processes.

Like the teachers, headteachers felt more confident about the accuracy of teacher assessment:

'Assessment is more robust but less formal.'

They were also convinced that the APP pilot had improved teachers' professional expertise in terms of levels:

'For one teacher new to year 1 APP, it has given her a practical working knowledge of expectations.'

In addition, they were convinced that the APP pilot had improved teachers' professional expertise in terms of assessment practice:

'They were making up tests before because they "didn't have one" and it was more formal than year 2!'

The view expressed at a meeting for headteachers in one local authority was:

'The best CPD that year 1 teachers have ever had.'

3.3 Local authority views on impact

At their final meeting in the project each local authority was asked to identify the impact which it had seen in working with schools. The themes set out below were common across the local authorities:

- improved range of evidence to underpin assessment
- teacher confidence
- recognition of the importance of opportunities for independent work (at a distance from learning, child-initiated activities)
- better teacher knowledge of assessment focuses for their subjects
- raised teacher expectations of pupils – lifted ceiling on progression
- better knowledge of strengths and weaknesses in individual and group knowledge
- highlighted gaps or inadequacies in provision

'First they see it as a gap in evidence *then* as a gap in provision.'

- more shared accountability for pupils' progress (for example, can't leave all the responsibility for achievement at the end of the key stage to the year 2 teacher)
- assessment criteria (guidelines) are a solid, consistent platform to share assessments across year groups

- can be used to give parents a view of the breadth of the subject
- moderation of APP judgements between schools promotes sharing of ideas and best practice.

3.4 Other evidence of impact

Direct evidence of the impact of APP on promoting a shared understanding of attainment and progress was seen at two meetings organised in separate local authorities to support transition. Coventry local authority organised a half-day meeting for year 1 teachers and the year 2 teachers due to receive their pupils from September 2008. Conversations were to be based on the assessments carried out for the six focus-group children included in the APP pilot, with the year 2 teachers drawing on their understanding of attainment from being involved in end of key stage 1 assessment and moderation. The meeting was busy and purposeful with lots of enthusiastic, professional discussion about the selected children. Year 2 teachers were able to probe and challenge evidence and judgements offered by their year 1 colleagues and all teachers appeared comfortable in using the completed assessment guidelines and the flowcharts used to make level judgements across the assessment focuses.

In Solihull, year 1 teachers were involved in a full-day meeting to support transition. In the morning they met with foundation stage colleagues to receive information about the pupils coming into year 2 in September 2008 and in the afternoon they met with year 2 colleagues to share information about the pupils leaving year 1, using the six focus-group children from APP as 'benchmark' pupils. Again, the whole day was busy and productive. The year 1 teachers in the morning worked to identify benchmark children for the following year and began to populate APP assessment guidelines with information given to them by foundation stage colleagues, from the FSP where appropriate, and to discuss implications for their teaching and planning for the autumn. All the teachers were constantly checking what the foundation stage teachers said against the assessment guidelines and their own understanding of the criteria. Teachers appeared comfortable in working with both the FSP outcomes and APP materials and could recognise the links between the two systems. One teacher observed how vital this sharing could be in ensuring that information about children is not lost when there is staff turnover. The power of this structured approach to the review of evidence of attainment and its ability to support professional conversation was evident.

An indirect measure of the impact of APP is the extent to which it has been valued by the participating local authorities and headteachers and their plans to continue/extend its use. All the participating local authorities are intending to promote the use of APP in their schools from this autumn; most had already established detailed implementation plans, including training for a range of staff. In several cases, the APP year 1 pilot schools will be acting as centres of support for schools new to APP. Of the headteachers who responded to the questionnaire, only two were unsure about the future use of APP in their schools. Most (20) were intending to introduce APP across the whole school or across the whole of key stage 1 and five were planning to extend the use to other teachers or other subjects, opting for a more gradual approach.

Finally, the APP materials will be used within the end of key stage 1 moderation activities in at least two of the local authorities which have taken part.

'This is now how we assess and what we use.' (headteacher)

4. Evaluation findings – Challenges in using APP

Trying out any new system of assessment will provide challenges for teachers and schools. From the APP pilot in key stage 2, much is already known about the major challenges posed by APP:

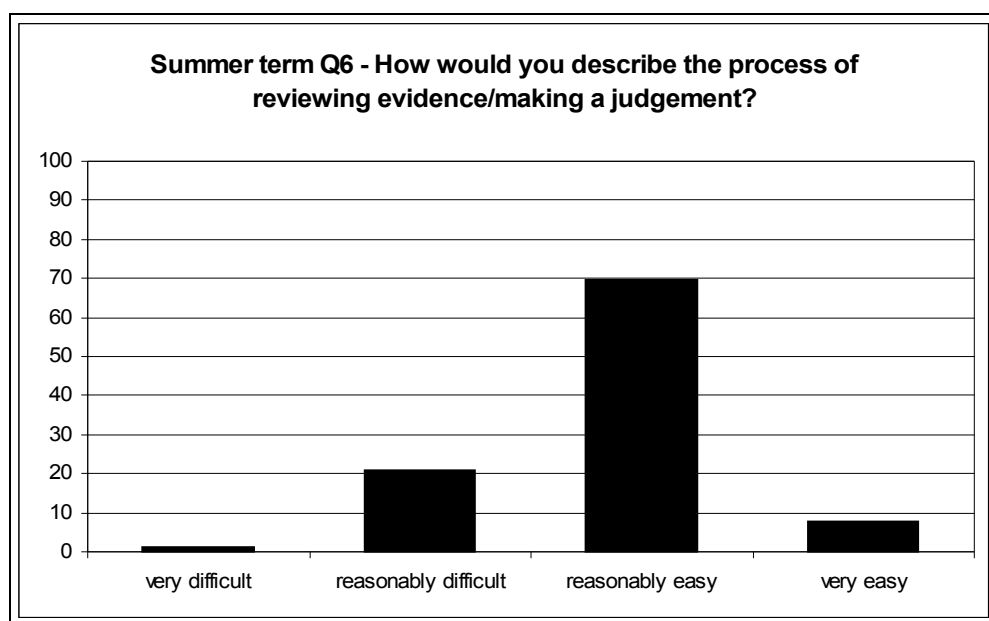
- managing the assessment process and particularly finding sufficient time
- developing expertise and familiarity with the assessment focus criteria
- recognising sound evidence to underpin assessment judgements
- using detailed assessments for a focus group of pupils to inform teacher assessment generally.

The pilot offered an opportunity to explore how teachers in year 1/key stage 1 would cope with these challenges and whether there were others that would be specific to this earliest stage in the national curriculum.

4.1 Managing the assessment process

From the beginning of this project, observation of year 1 teachers attending local authority meetings has suggested that, for them, managing the process itself has been less of an issue than for the teachers in the key stage 2 pilot. In the spring and summer questionnaires, teachers were asked directly about this. In spring, 45 per cent of respondents said that the process was reasonably easy or very easy and by summer this proportion had risen to 78 per cent (see Chart 3).

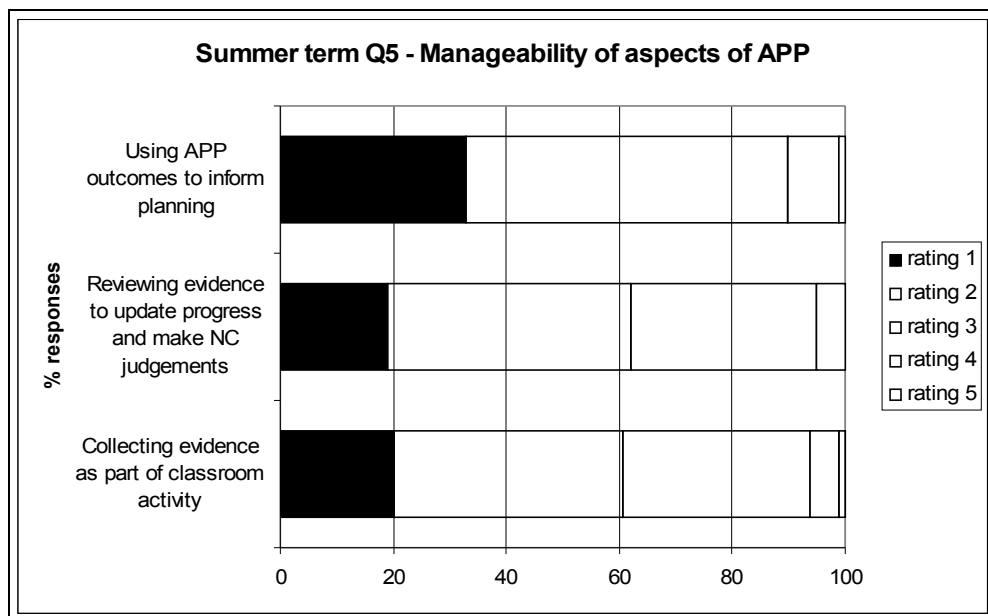
Chart 3 Teacher view on ease of APP process



The time that teachers estimated they spent on reviewing evidence to make a judgement for an individual pupil did not change significantly over the course of the project; the average in the summer term was 34 minutes.

Teachers were asked to rate three aspects of the APP process in terms of manageability. In Chart 4 a rating of 1 equates to 'very manageable' while a rating of 5 equates to 'not at all manageable'. Most teachers found all three aspects reasonably manageable, with the use of APP outcomes to inform planning being the easiest for them to manage.

Chart 4 Teacher view on manageability of different aspects of APP



When asked to identify drawbacks and difficulties with APP, the time needed for proper observation of children in order to get sound evidence was the most frequently mentioned. As teachers develop familiarity and understanding of what is required, then they need to develop a way to capture vital pieces of information/evidence. Many teachers worked closely with teaching assistants and recognised that this was a very productive way to work. However, others who desperately wanted to use this approach became frustrated because they either did not have enough teaching assistant time or lacked the time to train their teaching assistant in the use of the assessment focus criteria. Support available for year 1 teachers appeared to vary widely:

'The most reliable evidence was TA observation which I do not have the resource to do properly for six children.'

'[overcame difficulties by...] making good use of TS to collect evidence, we now have a TA observation book and when she worked with a small group she can record specific responses. TA is aware of the assessment focuses.'

In Solihull and Hillingdon, the importance of the teaching assistants has been recognised at local authority level and training has been organised and delivered for them.

There was recognition by teachers that the identification and recording of evidence became less time-consuming with practice:

'Once in a routine it was much easier.'

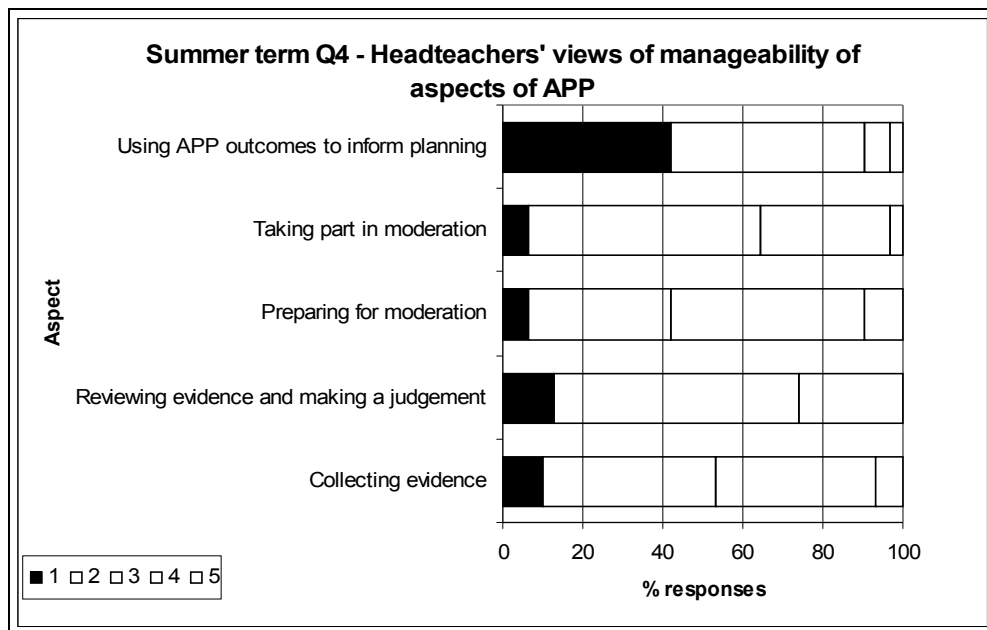
Unlike the teachers in the key stage 2 pilot, many of the year 1 teachers were using APP to assess both English and mathematics. There did not appear to be any significant difference in their views of manageability, whether working with one subject or two.

Generally then, the process in itself seemed manageable provided that time and resources to ensure a sound evidence base were available. However, APP has to be fitted alongside all other classroom activity. Where teachers were trying to use APP as well as other ongoing assessment models, often to feed into tracking/monitoring systems, they found the combination extremely challenging. 'Doing APP' as well as other half-termly or termly assessments was referred to as a significant drawback by many teachers, both in their questionnaire responses and at their meetings.

'If the whole school isn't following APP, it will be a heavier workload. Headteachers need to sign up for it and really go for it with all staff and ignore other assessments; otherwise teachers won't embrace APP so positively.' (teacher)

The relationship between APP teacher assessment and existing assessment practice is discussed in section 5 of the report.

Headteachers were asked for their views on the manageability of the process for teachers. Overall, 97 per cent considered the process either manageable or very manageable. When asked to rate different aspects in terms of manageability, like teachers, they felt that the use of outcomes to inform planning was the most straightforward. Preparing for moderation, which is likely to require the use of non-teaching time, was considered the least manageable aspect (see Chart 5). The requirements for teachers attending moderation meetings varied from local authority to local authority, as referred to in section 2. Those local authorities with experience of using moderation for APP within key stage 2 were more aware of the relationship between thoroughly prepared collections of evidence and effective moderation and were, as a result, perhaps more likely to have specific requirements of the teachers attending.

Chart 5 Headteacher views on manageability of aspects of APP

4.2 Developing expertise and familiarity

At the initial training session, it was obvious that teachers' familiarity with the assessment focuses varied considerably. Some teachers, particularly those who had worked in year 2, had a degree of familiarity with some of the assessment focuses for reading and writing; for others, getting to grips with the assessment focuses and their criteria was a significant barrier to overcome.

Teachers were trained alongside headteachers at the initial training sessions, which was recognised as a valuable feature of the pilot. However, a single day appeared less than adequate to develop an understanding of the APP approach, the nature and range of evidence required and how to find it, what the 'standards' at the national curriculum levels are, and how to make a judgement. Almost all local authorities followed up this central training with further sessions of their own. In practice, it was apparent through attending the 'moderation' meetings at the end of the autumn term and early in the spring term that teachers still did not have a clear view of the processes involved in making a level judgement across the range of assessment focuses. By January, many were collecting evidence and able to recognise achievement in individual assessment focuses but were not using this to make an overall judgement. Local authorities were alerted to this and ensured that in their contact with teachers this issue was addressed. The process of weighing and evaluating evidence on different aspects of learning in mathematics, reading and writing using professional knowledge is not a trivial task and lies at the heart of the way in which use of APP can give ownership of assessment to teachers. It needs sufficient time for teachers to explore what is expected of them.

The assessment focuses and criteria are set out on the assessment guidelines forms and there were issues with layout and format, identified by teachers and referred back to the project team. In particular, teachers using the mathematics guidelines confused the criteria themselves with the examples of how pupils might demonstrate achievement of the criteria. Because the four attainment

targets for mathematics each have a separate guidelines sheet, teachers sometimes found it difficult to get an overview of the pupils as 'mathematicians', a feature that they valued when using the guidelines sheets for reading or writing. The separate sheets also made simple paper management more difficult.

The wording and content of the guidelines was a concern for some. Throughout the pilot, anxiety was expressed about such terms as 'with support' and 'in some writing'. Many published assessment systems in use are tick-lists which imply that very simplistic formulas can be applied to decide how much progress pupils have made or to quantify their achievements. At the beginning, teachers often seemed to feel uncomfortable when asked to apply their own professional judgement. Again, local authority meetings and material sent in the form of a newsletter to participating teachers tried to address this.

The criteria for AF8 in writing caused problems for the year 1 teachers from the start. Teachers considered the language inaccessible and those who did understand the criteria were not convinced that the expectations at levels 1 and 2 matched existing advice in 'Letters and sounds'.

Teachers were also unhappy with a few instances of negative wording in the assessment guidelines. All their comments and feedback have been shared with the project team.

Despite these initial problems, from observation of meetings towards the end of the pilot it was obvious that teachers had an excellent grasp of the assessment focus criteria and could use them as the basis for detailed debate about the attainment and progress of their pupils. Teachers were clear that having the assessment focuses 'at their fingertips' meant that any classroom activity could become a source of evidence to inform their assessments:

'And now, having a good understanding of each assessment focus, so when planning or explanation from the children just happens I can go – yes, I could use this and quickly make a note.'

4.3 Recognising sound evidence

Responses to the first questionnaire indicated that just over a third of teachers considered finding evidence across the range of assessment focuses to be the most challenging part of making their assessment judgements. However, as they became aware that there was no need to create special assessment activities and that evidence did not all have to be in written form, this has been less of an issue. In discussions with teachers, their view was that, where there were mixed-age classes (year1/reception) or where teachers had experience of working in early years, the APP approach to observational assessment fitted perfectly with what they were doing or trying to do already. Other teachers who struggled to find evidence rapidly became aware that this was a result of the way their year 1 curriculum was organised (as discussed in the previous section).

Some elements were more difficult to find evidence for than others. In mathematics, the whole of the Ma1 attainment target was considered difficult, particularly the problem-solving and reasoning assessment focuses:

'[it's difficult] when children are very young and at lower levels.'

Occasionally teachers mentioned Ma3 and Ma4 because these were 'covered less'. Teachers who had not appreciated the difference between the examples and the criteria on the mathematics assessment guidelines were most likely to feel that they could not get sufficient evidence and were also likely to see a mismatch between using APP and following the new framework. Once they appreciated the nature of the examples, there did not appear to be any problem with using APP in the context of the framework and, in fact, there were positive comments about how well the two worked together.

Evidence for reading generally was considered challenging by some, but most teachers acknowledged that it was particular assessment focuses (AF6 and AF7) which were most difficult. Those who offered explanations as to why this was mentioned lack of appropriate texts within school. One teacher was clear that the biggest challenge for her with APP in year 1 was:

'Thinking about reading beyond AFs 1 and 2.'

The difficulties with interpreting the criteria for AF8 meant that this was a challenge for teachers to evidence. Beyond this there was a general recognition that the writing assessment focuses, which require 'choices' to be made by the writer (AFs 1 and 2), were a problem because 'not enough opportunities were given' At least one school was using the published system 'Read Write Inc' and by the end of the pilot the teachers were concerned that this constrained the evidence for writing available to them.

4.4 Using APP for a focus group of children

The message given to the pilot teachers was to carry out detailed assessments for a focus group of children using APP that will then inform teacher assessment of all pupils. The group of children selected as the focus group can potentially act as 'benchmark' children for others working at similar levels. (See annex on page 38.)

In the key stage 2 pilot this concept was very difficult for teachers to accept but in the year 1 pilot it appears to have been rather less challenging. There was only one specific reference to this as a difficulty in the questionnaire responses:

'Hard to generalise for a group from one child's assessment, as children do not fit in one box!'

Many teachers, however, accepted that they could use their focus group to represent the class and selected a pupil or pupils from each 'table group' to cover the main ability range in the class.

'We feel comfortable with the idea of assessing six pupils in detail and can sell the concept to other teachers.'

'We still need to make a judgement about everybody but not with such in-depth post-its. Maybe good to do a bit of observation on the others [non-focus group pupils] – maybe look at some specific things one of the children in the focus group can do and see if the non-focus group child is the same...'

There were several comments about the need to keep the make-up of the focus group under review, because the rapid progress made in year 1 can upset assumptions about the level at which children are working. In some schools local factors, resulting in large number of transient pupils, can also make the selection of a focus group difficult.

Perhaps because the headteachers attended training alongside the year 1 teachers, they seemed to appreciate the focus group approach:

'Focusing on one small group has enabled them to deepen their knowledge and improve their practice for the benefit of all pupils.'

Only one response from a headteacher specifically identified that the focus group approach would be a barrier to considering whether APP could replace existing assessments.

A number of the year 1 teachers have been so enthusiastic about the value of what they have learned about individual strengths and weaknesses that they really want to use detailed APP assessment of as many pupils as possible to support personalised learning:

'You want to have this valuable information about all pupils.'

They feel that with their improved knowledge of the assessment focuses they can do this, and were far more open than the key stage 2 teachers to suggested approaches, such as changing the focus group each term so that over a year every individual will have at least one detailed assessment. APP is in line with the suggested approach to informing teacher assessment set out in the key stage 1 'Building a picture' materials, so for those with year 2 experience the concept of using assessment information based on groups was not new.

Other teachers believe that while APP may indeed be time consuming for all pupils, it is no more demanding than some of the existing monitoring schemes they are expected to use and gives far more valuable information.

We wanted to reclaim teacher assessment because of the tracking systems in school. Agreed with head that we could put outcomes from APP into 'classroom monitor' and we've tracked the same groups using old and new systems. The outcomes from classroom monitor using old system did not match APP and we know it's because classroom monitor does not give the proper weighting like APP. APP just gives a better picture – classroom monitor is too unwieldy so APP has been the nail in the coffin for that.

4.5 Challenges specific to year 1

In addition to the issues set out above, there are particular features of year 1 which give rise to challenges for teachers adopting APP. In year 1, children are just beginning to work within the national curriculum. Prior to year 1, attainment and progress have been monitored using the foundation stage profile, the higher levels of which overlap in some case with national curriculum attainment. Some pupils will begin year 1 ready for the national curriculum; some making slower progress will be more appropriately assessed on the FSP for the majority of the year; others will be somewhere in between, with some aspects of their learning already within national curriculum levels and others not. Managing assessment in this context is a massive challenge for year 1 teachers. The challenge is not created by use of APP and teachers recognise this. Many can see the links between the assessment focus criteria and aspects of the FSP, particularly those teachers who have a sound understanding of the early learning goals and were already used to using the FSP in year 1. For other teachers though, existing year 1 practice did not include the use of the FSP (in a number of cases P scales were being used to track early progress for pupils working below level 1 but without special educational needs) and, for these teachers, introducing APP resulted in a feeling that they would have 'no way to demonstrate progress within year 1', as the message was clearly given through training that the P scales were not appropriate. Local authorities and the project team have done some work to help teachers understand the links between the early learning goals and the assessment focus criteria, and there was plenty of evidence at meetings that some teachers are able to track children across the two systems. What has not been done is to provide an accessible, manageable format so that teachers can combine the two systems for those pupils working literally at the borderline. This need for a combined document was mentioned by several teachers, who cited the relationship between APP and FSP as a potential difficulty for year 1 APP.

'Need to be able to 'dip' into the national curriculum levels.'

A number of teachers and some local authority staff considered that the criteria for mathematics at level 1 do not provide sufficient detail to support assessment at the very early stages in development. This is related to the view that children are actually making very rapid progress in year 1, albeit within a single level of the national curriculum, and they need sufficient scope to be able to demonstrate this progress.

Some of the teachers working in mixed-age classes (reception / year 1) became aware that, in comparison to their colleagues working in year 1 only classes, they might be tending to over-estimate their pupils' achievements because they would inevitably be comparing them to younger children.

A few teachers felt that the extent of oral work in year 1, particularly for mathematics, can add to the challenge of recording evidence. For others, the fact that APP recognises the value of oral evidence was a very positive feature.

In summary, apart from the lack of a coherent set of materials which support the mixed use of early learning goals and APP criteria for pupils on the borderline between early years foundation stage profile and the national curriculum, there were no substantial barriers specific to year 1 when using APP. Provided that the curriculum provision supported independent activity and observational assessment, some of the challenges faced by teachers in key stage 2 were less of a problem for the year 1 teachers.

5. Evaluation findings – Realising the aims of the pilot

Coming into the pilot, each local authority had clear aims, many of which were shared across more than one local authority. The headteacher questionnaire also probed for what they had hoped to achieve and asked if and how their expectations had been met. Looking across both local authorities and headteachers, four common themes emerge which are discussed in this section. All the local authorities were content that the pilot had demonstrated that APP had the power to deliver what they want and they were clear that important lessons had been learned for them to take forward in further development of APP locally. Of the 32 headteachers returning questionnaires, 25 considered that APP had met or exceeded their expectations, five felt that their expectations had been met but that the pilot had raised issues or concerns for them to address and two were not convinced that they had achieved what they wanted.

5.1 Can APP improve teacher assessment, particularly in year 1?

This question has already largely been answered through the analysis of the impact of APP. Headteachers, teachers and local authority staff were clear that the use of structured consistent assessment criteria within APP had improved the quality of teacher assessment judgements. There was evidence throughout the pilot of teachers becoming more confident in their decisions on attainment and progress, making better use of evidence to support assessment and becoming better able to use assessment outcomes to plan for the next steps in learning.

'Teachers felt empowered by the process – more confident in their judgements' (headteacher)

'Has raised the profile of year 1 teachers in school.'

Improvements to teacher assessment, however, were not 'instant'; teachers need to assimilate the assessment focus criteria and to explore whether they have access to sufficient, high-quality evidence. They need to practise the process and to check their understanding with colleagues to ensure that standards are applied consistently. Even the few schools who felt that APP had not yet made substantial difference to assessment practice had valued the opportunity to spend time working with colleagues in other schools to develop shared understanding of levels. Achieving improvement takes time and requires support. Finding this time outside the pilot was the most frequently expressed concern for headteachers in thinking about moving forward with APP.

In year 1 especially, teachers are particularly aware of the needs of all their pupils and there is still a need to exemplify the best way to assess those pupils working partly within the FSP and partly within the national curriculum. Materials to help them get a coherent view of next steps for these children would be a way to further improve their assessment practice.

Local authorities have a crucial role to play in setting and maintaining standards for teacher assessment, and through the pilot they have been able to build expertise in their staff to support future development and moderation in APP. At least two of the local authority have organised their meetings so that the 'moderation' discussions were led by the teachers themselves, with local

authority staff available to provide advice and support as required. Others organised meetings more along the lines of a training/development activity, with local authority staff working with small groups of teachers and closely involved in all discussions. Both approaches have value in specific situations but it was noticeable that, just like pupils, teachers were able to show their knowledge and ability very effectively when given the opportunity to work without too much support.

5.2 Can APP support more effective transition?

This was a question of great importance for the local authorities and the nature of the activities they have supported has often been designed around cross-phase or cross-school work.

In Cornwall, the emphasis was on the transition from key stage 1 to key stage 2, where there are separate infant and junior schools. Here the outcome was a very positive experience for most of the partner schools; headteachers reported enthusiastically the benefits of teachers working together across the phases and many felt that they now had a much closer and more trusting working relationship as a result of their shared work on APP evidence and judgements.

'The junior school and ourselves are striving for a more uniform progression in assessment between us – whether that means we adopt APP or otherwise. It would be good to have a document to pass on from infant to junior about a group of children. For once, it would be a document that ensures "a real picture" of what a child can do without the confines of "test conditions" and it also gives power and credibility back to the teacher – do we actually know our children?!!! Yes we do and it's proving that we do.'

'We used to spend the first two weeks of the autumn term reassessing year 3 pupils; we're not going to do that any more and that means we've got two more weeks of teaching. We won't do it again because now we believe what they tell us...'

In Solihull and Coventry the 'transfer' meetings have already been described in the previous section. Both of these demonstrated how beneficial the use of a shared language for attainment and progress can be in helping teachers to prepare for transition between one year group and the next.

Almost 80 per cent of headteachers responding to the questionnaire said that their school had supported work on APP assessments across year groups. In the majority of cases (66 per cent) this activity was some form of joint moderation, most commonly year 1 and year 2.

'Standards meetings involving foundation stage and key stage 1 have been introduced. Samples of evidence are discussed and levels assigned.'

One school referred to collaborative development work on the relationship between APP criteria and the FSP; five schools had already organised meetings to share information about APP across the staff. One referred to collaborative work using APP to assess pupils with special educational needs across all years in the school.

5.3 Can APP promote better attainment?

The purpose of assessment is to improve teaching and learning to help every pupil to achieve their maximum potential. Within a short-term pilot, and in the context of a qualitative evaluation, there is no way to measure improvements in attainment. It is interesting though that most of the headteachers were convinced that APP would improve attainment and that local authorities were confident that use of APP helped to raise expectations and to remove the ceiling on attainment. These convictions appear to be derived from their observations that teachers:

- knew more about what their pupils could do

'I could see the "whole" reader.'

'Particularly concerning more able pupils that work is not challenging enough for them.'

'A greater understanding of their thought processes in solving problems.'

- were much clearer about their next steps

'I know where to take them next – I look up at the next level on the guidelines.'

- could use the assessment outcomes to inform planning

'Highlighted common misconceptions which will be addressed in whole class/group.'

- were far more aware of gaps in curricular provision and coverage and were able to tackle this.

'Found we had a lack of unsupported writing – too much had been recently modelled and you need a time lapse between teaching and assessment.'

'Has supported the moves we are undertaking to develop a creative and thematic approach to the curriculum and supported audit of coverage as well as helping to identify maths and English in other subjects.'

5.4 Can APP replace existing assessments?

This issue was directly explored through the headteacher questionnaire in the context of existing assessment practice. The questionnaire first asked about current practice in year 1. Six respondents referred to the use of tests or specific assessment tasks twice yearly. Named tests included National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) (reading and mathematics), middle infant screening tests (MIST) and Salford reading. Some of these were intended to give national curriculum sub-level outcomes. Teacher assessment to provide sub-levels was referred to by six respondents and four referred to termly assessments, but without giving details of the outcomes or the method. There were two references to half-termly assessment, one using key objectives. Termly assessment or moderation of set pieces of written work was referred to by two respondents.

In some cases a bit more detail was given as to how teacher assessment was carried out. These included:

- use of 'I can' targets (two)
- use of Abacus photocopied worksheets for mathematics (one)
- use of 'Next steps for learning and mathematics progress grids' (two Solihull schools)
- use of key learning objectives records (two)

'With limited understanding and varying interpretations of exactly what constitutes a level.'

- use of observational assessment (2) 'limited'.

There were two references to using the FSP as a baseline on entry and one school in Solihull mentioned its relationship to the local materials referred to above. Two headteachers, both new to their schools, referred to assessment in year 1 as 'non-existent' and 'random'. One headteacher said that they did not level pupils on the national curriculum till the end of year 1 but did not refer to any processes within the year. There were four references to existing practice being strong, related to the extensive experience of teachers working with year 1, but even in this context APP can make a difference:

'Very strong summative and formative assessment being rated outstanding by Ofsted – where this project has been successful is pinpointing where children need to progress to next.'

Most of the headteachers (87 per cent), believed that APP could replace some or all of their existing assessments in year 1, but others saw it as a means to support and/or reinforce their existing practice. Those who gave positive responses to this question were asked to explain how this would fit with current arrangements for monitoring progress. About half of the headteachers currently using termly assessments said that APP outcomes would feed directly into their systems and some referred to the added value over and above existing teacher assessment, such as incorporation of Ma1 into judgements.

'It only means for us a change of recording sheets.'

'APP grids will form the basis of records for reading/writing/mathematics – these will feed into tracking forms. Evidence will be collected for three children from each of the three ability groups for moderation purposes.'

There were comments from several headteachers that they either intended to or already had reduced or removed testing in year 1:

'We no longer use such a battery of tests, as staff are confident that they have greater knowledge of children's abilities.'

'The intention of the school is to move away from the use of constant testing towards secure and consistent teacher assessment. We would still be able to record assessments at three points in the year to monitor children's progress.'

Some headteachers and teachers, while appreciating the quality of the outcomes from APP assessments, remained concerned about the pressure from external agencies to record sub-levels and to count points of progress and how this would fit with APP. The tension between the need to monitor progress for every individual pupil and the manageability of carrying out thorough APP assessments for anything more than a sub-set of the class is an unresolved issue for many, while others see no problem in developing tracking based on APP teacher assessments. Guidance for schools did not specify how APP could/should be used beyond the limits of the pilot but many schools will need support or exemplification to help them realise the full potential of APP assessment in replacing existing practice. Without this, there is the risk of APP becoming 'just another thing that teachers have to do'.

6. Lessons learned and recommendations

6.1 Headteacher support

The work of the pilot shows that APP can have a powerful impact on assessment in year 1, but within the pilot the involvement of the headteachers/senior leaders was considered by the local authorities to be absolutely critical in ensuring that the introduction of APP was a positive experience. The most successful schools in moving their practice forward were those where the headteachers had clear aims and expectations of the process and worked with their teachers to achieve real change. A willingness to make a commitment to APP as a replacement for other assessment activities, rather than to add it on to what may already be a substantial raft of activities is also extremely important to ensure that manageable systems can be developed. Once introduced, sufficient time and resources must be made available within school for teachers to complete assessments and to work with colleagues to support developments such as transition activities.

Recommendation: Any introduction of APP needs to be made with the full support of the headteacher in order to be effective.

6.2 Varying context in schools

There were varying views as to whether or not some features of assessment practice or provision predetermined if APP could be successfully introduced. Some participants were adamant that whatever the starting point for a school, in terms of embedded assessment practice, APP could move that practice on; others considered that awareness of basic principles of assessment for learning was a contributing factor for success. APP may be easier to adopt in classes where curricular provision supports rich opportunities for children to exercise choice and independence and, conversely, it can reveal to teachers the gaps in their curricular provision and so promote the development of breadth and creativity. While all schools can move forward, the journey that they have to take will be very different depending on their starting point and they will also need different types of support and access to appropriate sources of expertise and relevant materials.

Recommendation: The varied 'starting points' in schools need to be taken into account when introducing APP and relevant support will need to be made available locally.

6.3 Investing in development of expertise

It takes time for teachers to build up their knowledge and expertise in reviewing evidence and carrying out assessments. Time is needed for initial training, for practice, for collaborative work with colleagues on range and quality of evidence and for moderation to check that judgements are being made consistently. If any of these aspects is starved of time, then the benefits cannot be realised. In the pilot, all the participating local authorities followed up the introductory training session with further training in small groups or even in individual schools. Joint work with partner schools, in small clusters and as local authority groups reinforced learning and improved confidence. Advice to

one local authority from its headteachers was to create 'buddy' schools as part of its plans for APP rollout.

Recommendation: Teachers and schools new to APP need to be allowed time to develop their skills in assessment and embed their knowledge of the assessment criteria and how these are evidenced by pupils.

6.4 Maintaining momentum

APP is a challenge for teachers, no matter what their previous experience of teacher assessment. Many in the pilot referred to the 'initial paper shock'. Clear messages and expectations can help with this but it is important not to move too rapidly. For example, an over-emphasis on the detailed requirements for external moderation, before the basics of assessing individual pupils in a classroom setting are embedded, can cause confusion and frustration. Sound moderation procedures are important but too much emphasis on these procedures early on can conflict with some of the most important messages of APP. For example, the message that the information that teachers hold in their heads is every bit as valuable as what is written down can be undermined by the requirement for annotated collections of evidence to support formal moderation activities. If teachers are unclear about the relationship between everyday assessment practice and occasional moderation, then there is the potential for negative reactions to the whole process. There were instances in the pilot of teachers spending an inordinate amount of time in the preparation of their collections for moderation. The advice to start small and offer large amounts of encouragement from more experienced colleagues came through the evaluation feedback at all levels. Staged introduction with, for example, one subject at a time and informal sharing of evidence before moving on to more structured moderation can help. After a while benefits become clear, but if original anxieties or scepticism are not dealt with, teachers will not be able to get to this stage. Given time and support, teachers can move a long way from a less than promising start ('we know we didn't like it when we started but we can't remember now what it was we didn't like!') and the message from them was to be open and honest about the challenge involved.

Recommendation: Realistic timescales for introducing and extending APP are needed to ensure that teachers remain committed and are not discouraged

6.5 Moving into level 1

Manageability of using the different assessment systems in year 1 is a particular challenge. Teachers appreciate that use of the early learning goals may continue to be appropriate for some children during year 1 and that there is no neat crossover point into the national curriculum level 1. Modelling an assessment for a pupil working on the borderline, just coming into level 1 for some aspects of their learning, which builds on the guidance given to teachers in the pilot, could be very useful. Devising a format that allows teachers to record such an assessment in one place would also help. If this is not available as part of the published materials, teachers and local authorities will devise their own.

Recommendation: Consider how best to support teachers in the assessment of pupils in year 1 who are only just beginning to access the national curriculum using a combination of APP criteria and early learning goals.

6.6 Messages for initial training

Teachers and headteachers need to have an overview of the whole APP process as well as some understanding of the detail, as part of their introduction to APP. It is difficult in an introductory session to give enough information for teachers to get this overview and, particularly, the link to planning at the same time as being introduced to the standards of attainment at particular levels, in order to start developing consistency in judgements. In the initial training for the pilot, the emphasis was very much on the detail of the APP criteria for individual assessment focuses and how these are evident in children's work. Teachers did not get a chance to practise weighing evidence across a range of assessment focuses to arrive at an overall level judgement and, when they tried this subsequently, many did not use the guidance provided and then distrusted the level outcome.

Beyond the pilot, a clear message will be required about the relationship between APP outcomes and those from other assessments, as well as how APP can be used for tracking/monitoring progress. Models could be developed based on schools which have successfully adopted APP in place of other assessments.

Recommendation: Content of the initial introductory training should include a clear presentation of the end-to-end process for APP teacher assessment in the classroom and model the successful use of APP as a whole school assessment system.

Annex

This independent evaluation report was produced during the pilot of the assessing pupils' progress (APP) approach in the school year 2007/8. The findings informed the work of the APP development team, enabling the team to make adjustments and refinements in response to feedback from pilot schools.

This report refers to some features that were specific to the pilot phase and will not apply to the APP approach when used by schools beyond the pilot. In particular:

- **Data from a sample of pupils in the class:** To systematically collect and analyse data from pupils in the pilot schools, the key stage 1 pilot required participating teachers to submit termly data from a small sample of pupils in their classes. Some teachers, wishing to make the link with a more personalised approach to learning, chose to use the assessment guidelines with all of their pupils before the end of the pilot. We anticipate that, when implemented as a mature system across a whole school, teachers would apply the APP approach to all pupils. There are materials to support this process on The National Strategies website at www.nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/primary/assessment/assessingpupilsprogressapp.