IMAGINATIVE MINDS GROUP
TeachingTimes

Guaranteeing Assessment

BOOKMARK

It seems as though the business of education has gradually become more and more complicated. The forthcoming pupil and parent guarantees promise interventions based on teacher assessment. How can school's keep up?

Pupil and parent guarantees – a focus on assessment

The 'Pupil and Parent Guarantees' document (DCSF) is part of a consultation currently running and due to be completed in April. It places additional emphasis upon schools reporting regularly to parents on their children's attainment.

It also places increased emphasis on personalization. Personalization of learning and its associated one-to-one support and group tuition and intervention is heavily reliant upon effective systems of assessment for learning. Unless teachers are very clear about the standards pupils have attained and what they need to do next they will not be able to plan the intervention to enable the pupil to improve. Headteachers are responsible for deciding who should and who should not receive intervention. They need access to the correct information to be able to do this.

So what exactly is being promised on the behalf of schools?

In primary schools

Guarantee 3.4: Where a child is not on track to achieve Level 2 by the end of Key Stage 1, the school will inform the parents of what additional support the school will provide – including through small group and one-to- one tuition – and what they, as parents, can do to help their child

The entitlement to catch-up support for Key stage 1 pupils is new. The headteacher must decide whether the pupil is unlikely to achieve Level 2 or not using evidence from the progress that the pupils has made and ongoing monitoring of pupils' class and home work.

Schools may find themselves in a position where entitlement to this additional support will be contested by parents and so need to ensure that they have secure evidence to back the decisions they make.

Guarantee 3.8: That every pupil, aged 7–11 who has fallen behind national expectations and is not making good progress, receives one-to-one tuition to get them back on track – from September 2010

In Key Stage 2 the emphasis upon 'catch-up' continues. The criteria for receiving additional support at this point include:

- End-of-Key Stage 1 teacher assessment
- Ongoing teacher assessment during Key Stage 2

In either case, once more the reliability and validity of the teacher assessment is vital if accurate judgements are to be made. Once more, parents may contest if they feel their child should be eligible and they are not provided with the support.

In secondary schools

Guarantee 3.9: That every pupil beginning Year 7 behind national expectations in English and mathematics receives one-to-one or small group tuition and their learning is assessed through

a progress check which is reported to parents – from September 2010

It will be expected that the secondary school will decide what intervention is most appropriate for each child based upon the primary school's assessment, transition information and their own judgement. Where one-to-one tuition is decided upon this must be part of a reasonable offer of at least 10 hours delivered by a qualified tutor.

Guarantee 8.7: Parents receive information about catch-up support for pupils starting secondary school behind national expectations plus information on their child's progress, including the results of a new progress check during Year 7

At the end of Year 7 it is also planned to introduce progress checks for parents and pupils so that they are clear about the progress they have made. This check is to be based upon teacher assessment which makes it even more imperative that teachers have the support to ensure their assessments are accurate.

Finding a solution

The level of sophistication in testing, assessment and tracking must be at record levels. Schools are already required to maintain detailed information about pupils' attainment and levels of progress to support their development but also to show the effectiveness of the school. This is a heavy burden for many class teachers and one that they need help with. The pupil and parent guarantees increase the imperative.

The problem is that some solutions can seem to add to the burden rather than alleviate it. Archbishop Cranmer C of E School in Aslockton searched for something that was going to keep assessing pupils as stress free as possible for their teachers.

Situated in Aslockton on the outskirts of Nottingham, Archbishop Cranmer is a Church of England primary school particularly noted for its outstanding arts curriculum. It caters for 170 pupils and also offers care for children from the age of 2 ½ at Cranmer Preschool situated on the school's campus. They were already using a reporting tool to record pupil's progress but wanted to increase this by using technology that would also help with report writing and provide regular clear overviews of pupils' progress on both an individual and class basis.

Head teacher at Archbishop Cranmer School, Debbie Yates-Linnell explains: "In addition to providing school-wide reports for Ofsted and governors' review, there's an increasing need for all teachers to have individual pupils' development logged in one designated place, for all staff including myself to have access to and gain a first hand account of each student's progress from which to plan the children's next steps in their learning."

In 2005, Debbie attended a Rushcliffe Headteacher's meeting, and here viewed a demonstration of the interactive markbook, 'Classroom Monitor' from Prime Principle. "I was thoroughly impressed with the tool's capability and particularly taken with the chance it gives teachers to monitor children's progress across the curriculum not just in the core subjects and to use this as their starting point for planning children's learning.;" comments Debbie.

How it works

Using classroom monitor teachers can log in when they want to and record as pupils achieve competencies. It uses a traffic light system for inputting assessment information but also allows teachers to record their own comments and make notes – annotating as they go along. It provide a means of helping teachers keep track of where pupils are and will flag any child who appears to be underachieving.

It is also useful from a management point of view as it provides senior staff with an overview helping with analysis on a class, cohort and school basis. It can present the information in a variety of ways and helps with target-setting.

One method

This is one method that schools are using to assist in the complex and high stakes development of teacher assessment. The accounts from those schools that have used it are very positive. In the end schools must do their research and find the package that is most appropriate for them and their specific needs. Certainly, new technology is one way in which the classteacher just might be able to kept her head above water.