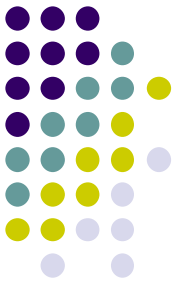# Priority review: effective pupil tracking

July 2013

# Why was this priority review undertaken?

On 10 October 2012, the then Minister for Education and Skills launched the national implementation plan *Improving schools,* which set out our future expectations and aspirations for improving our education system. A firm focus on improvement and progression is vital if we are to secure improvement across the education system and improve learner outcomes.

Effective pupil tracking has an essential role to play in the improvement of outcomes and well-being for learners of all ages. Different groups of learners have distinctive learning needs. Robust and purposeful tracking systems allow schools to target these learning needs, and help school leaders and teachers realize their learners' potential.

The Welsh Government, along with its principal partners, will use the findings and recommendations of this priority review to disseminate good practice and promote high-quality and consistently effective tracking systems throughout Wales.

An outline of the main findings from recent Estyn reports
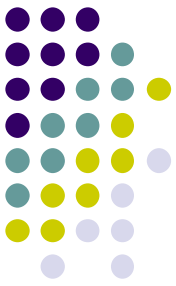
'Around two-fifths of schools have shortcomings in how accurately they assess pupil progress and in the use they make of data from assessment. Standardisation, moderation and tracking procedures are appropriate in many schools. However, in a minority of schools, teachers' marking does not identify the next steps that pupils need to take and too few pupils are involved in assessing their own progress. Too many schools do not use assessment findings to identify targets for improvement consistently across the school or follow their agreed assessment policy.'
(Extract from primary sector report section – HMCI's Annual Report: 2011–2012)

'Teachers do not make sure that pupils review and respond to their marking, particularly to improve the accuracy of their written work.'
(Extract from secondary sector report section – HMCI's Annual Report: 2011–2012)

'Improve the use of data and assessment to identify, track and monitor the progress of more able and talented pupils and share this information with all staff and relevant parents.'
(Recommendation: *Supporting more able and talented pupils in secondary schools,* June 2012)

'Secondary schools should: develop effective systems for tracking pupils' progress in developing generic skills to inform future planning.'
(Recommendation: *An evaluation of the impact of the non-statutory Skills framework for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales at key stage 3,* May 2012)

'. . . however, few schools plan to improve their numeracy provision or track learners' progress well enough to identify where improvements can be made.'
(Extract from *Numeracy for 14 to 19-year-olds*, July 2011)

What was the detail behind this priority review?
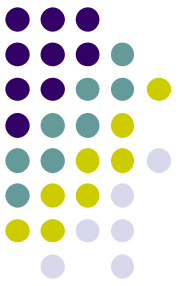
Analysis of the following five elements
- Content of tracking systems and frequency and consistency of data recording.
- Linking tracking data to Assessment for Learning (AfL).
- Using tracking data to inform differentiated and challenging learning and teaching.
- Using tracking data to plan mid- and long-term distribution of resources
- Tracking well-being.

Development of hypotheses
- Content – what is recorded and why?
- Frequency – how often data is recorded, and is there consistency in input and analysis?
- AfL – how does the data entered inform AfL?
- Informing learning and teaching – is there consistency and variation?
- Planning mid- and long-term distribution of resources – does this reduce peaks and troughs in year-on-year data?
- Wellbeing – how effectively is this tracked?

Field visits
- Relevant regional consortia Senior System Leaders/System Leaders with responsibility for pupil tracking.
- A sample of schools (primary, secondary and special) and nursery settings identified by Estyn and/or regional consortia as having effective pupil tracking systems.

What was the purpose of this priority review?
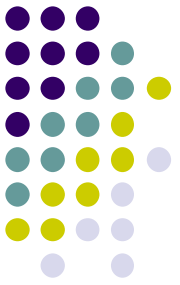
- This priority review was carried out by the School Standards and Delivery Division of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).

- The priority review tested the hypotheses by:
    - analysing the main findings from Estyn reports
    - consulting with the key partners
    - collecting evidence from field visits to schools (primary, secondary and special), nursery settings and regional consortia in relation to policy guidance and practice.

- The report identifies:
    - best practice in relation to the content and frequency of use of effective pupil tracking systems
    - best practice in relation to how data from effective tracking systems is used to improve learner outcomes and well-being
    - best practice in relation to how data from tracking systems is used to inform mid- and long-term planning of resources
   - case studies
    - recommendations.

1. Content of tracking systems and frequency and consistency of data recording
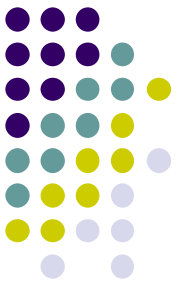
Examples of effective practice

- Tracking systems contain a wide range of both statutory and non-statutory components, including end of Foundation Phase and key stage assessments (including Foundation Phase Indicator (FPI) and Core Subjects Indicator (CSI)), Cognitive Abilities Tests (CATs) and Fischer Family Trust (FFT) data.

- Data from half-term, term or annual achievements or assessments, data relating to ongoing teacher assessments, current performance and half-term or term target data across subject areas, key skills and data from in-school or commercially produced material for the assessment of language (including reading) and mathematics is also collected as part of wider tracking systems.

- Assessments of core and non-core subjects are generally made against outcomes or level descriptions.

- Frequency of data recording varies in relation to subject area, key stage and context and use of database, but is generally on a half-term, term or annual basis. Specific attention is given to regular and robust tracking of data relating to GCSE controlled assessments in Key Stage 4. This helps to ensure that the timing of assessment entry happens at the most appropriate time for learners and informs appropriate interventions to enhance prospects for success.

- Particular attention is given to tracking specific groups of learners such as free school meals (FSM), additional learning needs (ALN), more able and talented (MAT) and looked after children (LAC).

1. Content of tracking systems and frequency and consistency of data recording
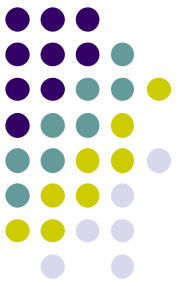
Examples of effective practice

- Data from reasoning skills activities and assessments is tracked and monitored in order to inform interventions that prepare learners effectively for the Programme for International Student Assessment tests (PISA) in Key Stage 4.

- Data from assessments informs future target setting and is used to measure the impact of interventions on learner progress.

- Tracking of learners' progress against challenging, well-informed targets, that are based on learners' entitlements rather than non evidence-based targets, makes a significant contribution to raising standards.

- Progress of Key Stage 4 learners is carefully monitored using indicators such as Level 1 (L1), Level 2 (L2) including language, L2 including mathematics and Level 2 including language and mathematics (L2+) against FFT targets.

- Regular meetings between heads of department ensure tracking data consistency and moderation and ensure that learners' attainments and targets are appropriate to their general or 'globing' grade or target.

- Members of senior leadership teams (SLT) and senior management teams (SMT) are linked to departments to ensure robust and consistent data entry and use of data to inform planning and interventions.

- Key personnel, such as members of SLT/SMT or data managers, have a positive impact on the effectiveness of tracking systems, including clarity, accessibility and analysis.
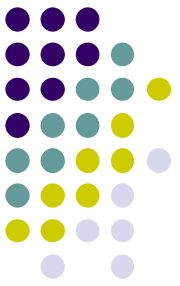
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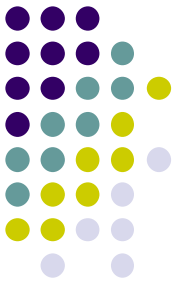
Case study – Llangynidr Community Primary School

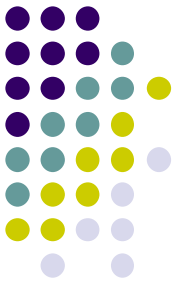www.estyn.gov.uk/english/docViewer/236718.3/using-data-to-improve-pupils-skills/?navmap=33,53,158

2. Linking tracking data to Assessment for Learning (AfL)

Examples of effective practice

- Linking tracking data to AfL, including learners' self and peer assessment and review, ensures that learners and teachers are aware of the next steps for progress.
- The data leads to improvements and learners and teachers have evidence that strategies and interventions are effective, as well as informing future interventions.
- Regular tracking data from AfL ensures that teachers are able to give quick and relevant feedback to learners that enables them to make rapid progress against targets for improvement.
- Individual year, key stage or heads of department/teacher meetings to discuss tracking data, including peer assessment, inform AfL and whether learners require individual interventions or to be placed in intervention groups.
- AfL is not an 'add-on'; it is intrinsically linked to formative assessments and is integral to schools' assessment processes.
- Robust and regular tracking of AfL data allows schools to be proactive and plan individually tailored interventions and support for learners during time allocated to the preparation for GCSE controlled assessments.
- Tracking data for individual learners is used across subject areas and departments.
- Tracking data from individual learners' assessments is used to inform teaching methods and strategies and to form learner groups.

3. Using tracking data to inform differentiated and challenging learning and teaching

Examples of effective practice

- Tracking data is used effectively and consistently to inform challenging provision and catch-up interventions and to challenge underperformance.
- Individual year, key stage or heads of department/teacher meetings to discuss tracking data of individual learners' progress informs effective differentiation.
- Tracking data and lesson observations are used to inform learning and teaching targets for performance management.
- Tracking data is used to inform differentiated learning and teaching, including intervention by learning support assistants (LSAs) and moving learners to higher year groups for literacy and numeracy MAT provision.
- Tracking and FFT data is analysed to ensure appropriate consistency in learners' progress and targets across subject areas and departments.
- ALN and MAT learners' needs are suitably provided for through appropriate interventions identified by tracking systems.
- Tracking systems allow learners with similar needs to be grouped together for appropriate provision with further differentiation within these groups. This provision includes providing classes with fewer numbers for less able learners.
- Data from tracking systems allows teachers to identify learners who are able to work independently and complete tasks within a specified time – and informs interventions for learners who find this difficult. This is particularly effective in supporting learners to undertake tasks on a timed basis in preparation for specific assessments, such as reading and numeracy tests and external examinations.
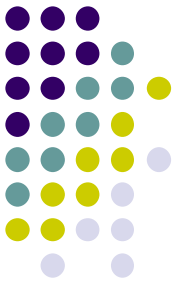
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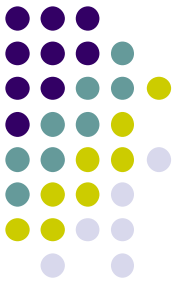
Case study – Glan Usk Primary School

www.estyn.gov.uk/english/docViewer/228419.1/data-analysis-a-key-component-to-improving-pupils-performance/?navmap=33,53,158

4. Using tracking data to plan mid- and long-term distribution of resources

Examples of effective practice

- Tracking systems inform appropriate mid-term interventions such as increased learning time and changes to different learning and teaching methods, a higher number of sets or classes within subjects to ensure smaller learner numbers in each one, revision classes and different learning and teaching methods (pedagogical change).
- Continuous professional development (CPD) and the effective use of school effectiveness grants (SEG) and pupil deprivation grants (PDG) funding enable schools to target mid- and long-term interventions and adapt learning and teaching methods to suit all learners and all groups or cohorts.
- Tracking data identifies problems, e.g. group or cohort underperformance in literacy, so that teachers with different skills and learning and teaching methods can be utilised to ensure pedagogical change which leads to improved outcomes for particular groups or cohorts.
- Opportunities are provided for different learning and teaching methods to allow less able groups or cohorts to develop skills and make progress in different ways.

4. Using tracking data to plan mid- and long-term distribution of resources
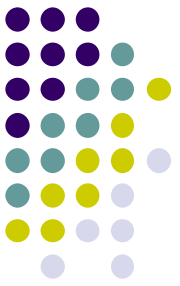
Examples of effective practice

- Tracking data for groups or cohorts is analysed as early as Year 7 to identify learners' potential for achieving L1, L2 or L2+, and appropriate long-term interventions are introduced at the earliest possible stage.

- Effective and coordinated use is made by secondary schools of feeder schools' end of Key Stage 2 and non-statutory data to target individual learners' needs more effectively.

- Secondary schools share resources with their feeder primary schools to ensure that individual pupil tracking and target setting is undertaken collaboratively and consistently. This leads to improved cross-sector understanding and consistency of data entry, data analysis and target setting, as well as earlier and more effective long-term planning for interventions.

- This collaborative approach to pupil tracking, along with early identification of less able cohorts in the primary and secondary sectors, informs long-term changes to the distribution of resources and enables curricular and pedagogical change in order to improve outcomes for these cohorts. This helps to avoid excessive peaks and troughs in year-on-year end of key stage assessments and external examinations results.

4. Using tracking data to plan mid- and long-term distribution of resources
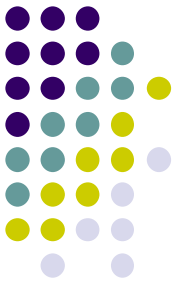
Case study – Cwmtawe Community School

www.estyn.gov.uk/english/docViewer/271443.9/ambitious-targets-improve-pupil-performance/?navmap=33,53,159

5. Tracking well-being

Examples of effective practice

- Tracking of well-being includes attendance, exclusions and behaviour data.
- Tracking of well-being includes the use of tools such as pupil attitude to self and school (PASS), National Attendance and Behaviour Review (NBAR) survey outcomes and the Boxhall Profile.
- Well-being tracking data is integral to whole-school tracking systems and has an effect on outcomes for learners. It is not held in separate and exclusive databases.
- The 'red-amber-green' (RAG) system is used for early identification of behaviour and well-being issues. This informs early interventions.
- Grant funding is used to ensure staff members are allocated to monitor well-being data and work with families to increase parental engagement and community cohesion.
- Schools use data entries such as 'worthy of praise' or 'cause for concern' at a whole-school level to monitor behaviour and well-being.
- Staff members with responsibility for inclusion, such as head of well-being, monitor well-being data and suggest appropriate interventions when required.
- Whole-school tracking systems have indicators that are directly linked to learner well-being as integral components, e.g. 'demonstrating good work ethic', 'independent learning', 'improving own learning', 'working well with others', 'behaviour', 'attendance' and 'homework'. This is monitored for all learners, with particular attention given to specific groups such as FSM, ALN, MAT and LAC.
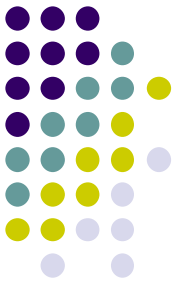
Recommendations

- Increase whole-school consistency in the accuracy and regularity of data entered into tracking systems and analysis of data to inform planning and interventions.

- Improve and embed whole-school read-across of tracking data between subject areas and departments in order to encourage consistency and 'global grading', which allows for individual learners' attainments and targets to be compared across different subject areas or departments.

- Promote consistent dialogue relating to tracking data and analysis for all teaching staff and across subject areas and departments, including regular and common meetings between core subject leaders and heads of department, in order to promote consistency and accountability.

- Improve and embed use of data such as FFT in order to accurately set challenging target grades for all learners that are based on real learner entitlement, and do not act as a ceiling for attainment.

- Make effective use of tracking data to challenge and develop MAT learners.

- Embed good practice in terms of links between AfL and tracking systems, leading to greater rigour in assessments and quality and accuracy of interventions.

Recommendations
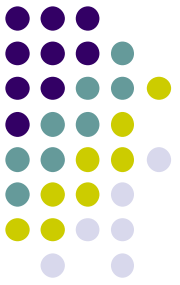
- Improve and embed good practice in the use of tracking data to inform differentiation that makes a real difference to provision for individual learners and leads to improvements in outcomes.

- Expand practice and improve consistency in the planning of mid and long term distribution of resources, including the sharing of resources between secondary schools and feeder primary schools, to allow cross-sector collaboration in tracking and target setting.

- Make use of cross-sector resource sharing to identify and facilitate long-term curricular and pedagogical changes for future cohorts at risk of underachieving or negatively affecting schools' year-on-year data.

- Develop tracking of well-being in order to improve outcomes, behaviour and attendance for all learners including specific groups such FSM, ALN, MAT and LAC.

The Welsh Government is grateful to the following for their invaluable contributions to this priority review:

Schools/nursery settings
- Cwmtawe Community School
- Glan Usk Primary School
- Little Inspirations Day Nursery (Llantrisant)
- Llangynidr Community Primary School
- Llantwit Major Comprehensive School
- Portfield Special School
- St. Joseph's Roman Catholic High School
- Ysgol David Hughes
- Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen.

Regional consortia
- CSCJES (Central South)
- EAS (South East)
- ERW (South West and Mid)
- GwE (North).