

QUALITY OF TEACHER ASSESSMENT AND MATERIALS USED TO SUPPORT ASSESSMENT (SINCE SCRAPPING OF KEY STAGE 1 TESTING)



...Rhagoriaeth i bawb... ...Excellence for all...



BUDDSODDWR MEWN POBL
INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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CONTENTS	PAGE
1. Introduction	4
2. Main findings	5
3. Recommendations	8
4. The current position in schools:	
4.1 Background	8
4.2 Benefits of the removal of tasks and tests	10
4.3 The link between teacher assessment and teaching and learning	10
4.4 The moderation of pupils' work	12
4.5 Portfolios of assessed work	14
4.6 Support for assessment from LEAs	15
4.7 How teacher assessment could be improved – the view of schools	16
5. The current position in local education authorities:	
5.1 Background	17
5.2 Strategies and opportunities for moderation between schools	18
5.3 Support for the development of subject portfolios	18
5.4 Assessment training	19
5.5 Quality assurance processes	20
5.6 How teacher assessment could be improved – the view of LEAs	21
6. The use of materials to support assessment	22

1. Introduction

1.1 Statutory tasks and tests in key stage 1 have been part of the educational landscape for more than a decade. At the end of key stage 1, tasks and tests were administered to year 2 pupils with teachers also finalising their own teacher assessments of pupils' progress. Teacher assessment had parity of esteem with the tasks and tests from the outset, although the tests were always perceived as being more important. Over time, the importance of teacher assessment was lessened with the focus being firmly on the end of key stage tests.

1.2 On 1 November 2001 the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning announced that there would be no statutory tasks or tests in Wales at key stage 1 in 2002 or in future years. The reasons behind the decision included:

- the high reliability of teacher assessment judgements;
- the 'over preparing' of pupils for the tasks and tests and the consequent time devoted to this;
- the subsequent release of time that could be directed to other more productive classroom activities;
- an aim to reduce the administrative burden on primary school teachers; and
- the perception that the tasks and tests provided no significant additional information to that derived from teachers' own assessments of pupils' progress and attainment.

1.3 Currently, teacher assessment information at key stage 1 is used for a wide range of purposes. However, the accuracy and consistency of these assessments is critical to the information generated being used effectively.

1.4 This report describes good practice in a variety of different educational settings. It draws on:

- school inspection reports;
- discussions with headteachers and teaching staff; and
- visits made by Her Majesty's Inspectors to a range of schools and local education authorities (LEAs).

1.5 Information on assessment at key stage 1 was gathered from each LEA area in Wales by:

- visiting a school in the LEA;
- gathering detailed information from the LEA itself; or, in some cases,
- a combination of both processes.

Twenty-four schools were visited in sixteen different LEAs. In addition, detailed information was obtained from eleven LEAs.

1.6 The report describes the situation in **schools** including:

- the current position in schools with key stage 1 pupils;
- the benefits of a focus on teacher assessment;
- the moderation of pupils' work; and
- the development of portfolios of assessed work.

1.7 The report also refers to the work of **LEAs** in supporting assessment at key stage 1 and describes:

- the current situation in LEAs;
- LEA strategies for the quality assurance of teacher assessment including opportunities provided for moderation between schools and between LEAs;
- LEA support for the development of subject portfolios that exemplify the achievement to be expected at the different National Curriculum levels; and
- training for assessment.

1.8 The report finally refers to the use schools make of a range of materials to support assessment. This section refers importantly to the support provided by ACCAC materials.

2. The main findings of the report:

2.1 The majority of key stage 1 teachers, and especially those in year 2, have welcomed the abolition of tasks and tests. Teachers state that this provides them with more time and therefore greater flexibility to ensure a breadth of curriculum provision. They also feel that they have more opportunities to make more accurate and reliable assessments of pupils by greater use of continuous assessment throughout their teaching programmes.

2.2 A few LEAs surveyed state that they can already see the benefits of the new assessment arrangements in schools. They point to the welcome disappearance of two features:

- the over emphasis of time spent on the core subjects to the detriment of other non-core foundation subjects; and
- too much time spent on assessment at the end of key stage 1.

2.3 Most schools have integrated assessment effectively into the teaching and learning process. They have been successful in doing this by developing workable and manageable systems for assessing and recording pupils' achievements.

2.4 The quality of teacher assessment is, on the whole, accurate. However, schools are relying more and more on the past assessment experiences of their teachers. The accuracy of assessment in a small number of schools is unsatisfactory. There must be consistency in the quality of assessments made by different teachers and in different schools if teacher assessment is to be trusted.

2.5 Teachers recognise that a well planned strategy for the moderation of pupils' work enables them to be confident in the accuracy and consistency of their assessments in line with National Curriculum expectations.

2.6 All schools visited took part in moderation sessions. However, the frequency of moderation sessions varied considerably from once a month to once a year. In all schools surveyed, all teachers are involved in the process of moderation. In a small number of schools, learning support assistants also take part.

2.7 The focus of moderation activities generally is English and mathematics. However, in a small number of schools teachers also discuss work in science and the non-core foundation subjects of the National Curriculum.

2.8 At key stage 1, most schools have portfolios of assessed pupils' work that reflect the range of National Curriculum levels appropriate to the key stage. These portfolios are usually put together following discussion and agreement between teachers during moderation activities.

2.9 Schools rely on LEAs to provide them with support but the amount of support varies, particularly in relation to:

- opportunities for moderation between schools;
- training for assessment that clarifies standards;
- external verification of the levels awarded to pupils' work; and
- the analysis of assessment information.

2.10 There are few opportunities provided by LEAs for moderation between schools. Most schools reported that they had not engaged in moderation activities with other schools during the last two years. However, in a small number of schools moderation activities involve teachers from several local schools coming together to share judgements about English, mathematics and science. These teachers all usually work within key stage 1 but, in some cases, teachers from key stage 2 also take part in the process.

2.11 In a small number of LEAs, moderation activities are undertaken each year for English, mathematics and science and involve all year 2 teachers. None of the LEAs surveyed engaged in moderation activities with other LEAs across Wales.

2.12 Many LEAs provide training for teachers to support teacher assessment, particularly for the end of the key stage. However, in some LEAs the range of assessment training for key stage 1 teachers is very limited. In these LEAs, key stage 1 teachers are not updating their generic assessment skills and are not discussing assessment issues with teachers from other schools.

2.13 Only a few LEAs now have detailed strategies to ensure the accuracy and consistency of teacher assessment across their schools. A small number of LEAs have produced portfolios of assessed work. These LEAs have involved teachers in the preparation of the portfolios and in the discussions centred on the levelling of the work in line with National Curriculum expectations.

2.14 The reduction in quality assurance visits to schools, together with less inter-school moderation and a reduction in the assessment training programme, means that teachers are less certain about making accurate judgements based on the general criteria of the level descriptions.

2.15 Most LEAs provide schools with an effective analysis of assessment information, particularly at the end of the key stage. In LEAs where this analysis is very effective, it includes information that allows schools to assess their progress over time and to compare their own performance with that of schools of a similar nature.

2.16 Some teachers are uncertain about the judgements they are making and are using commercially produced assessments. Almost all schools now use standardised tests in English and mathematics in key stage 1. In a few schools the volume of assessment materials used has increased. In these schools this has had an adverse impact on workload.

2.17 ACCAC has a central role in Wales in helping to ensure that teacher assessment at key stage 1 is accurate and consistent. All schools surveyed were using ACCAC materials to support their judgements of pupils' progress in line with National Curriculum expectations.

3. Recommendations

If confidence in the quality of the assessment system at key stage 1 is to be maintained, Estyn recommends that LEAs, ACCAC, schools and, where appropriate, the Welsh Assembly Government work to ensure that:

3.1 new teachers are given enough opportunities in their initial training and school induction programmes so that they have a clear idea of pupils' achievements in relation to National Curriculum levels;

3.2 all schools have access to, and adequate funding for, an appropriate range of in-service training courses to update teachers on assessment skills;

3.3 there is an increase in opportunities for teachers to moderate pupils' work including within individual schools, between schools and phases and between LEAs;

3.4 the quality and consistency of teacher assessment are assured through an external system involving visits to schools and professional dialogues with teachers about pupils' work and the levels awarded;

3.5 funding is made available for LEAs to carry out the quality assurance of teacher assessment annually in all key stage 1 schools; and

3.6 further exemplification materials and optional assessment materials are provided by ACCAC.

4. The current position in schools

4.1 Background

4.1.1 The current requirement at key stage 1 is for teachers to assess the level attained by each pupil in each attainment target in the National Curriculum subjects of English or Welsh, mathematics and science by means of teacher assessment.

4.1.2 Currently, teacher assessment information at key stage 1 is used for a wide range of purposes:

- providing **summative** information in relation to individuals, groups and classes at set times in order to inform in-school and local education authority planning and target setting;
- informing teachers about **progress** of pupils at the end of the key stage;

- providing some year-on-year **diagnostic** information about the progress made by pupils, classes, schools and LEAs;
- indicating **standards** at national, local education authority and school level on an annual basis;
- providing **public accountability** at school, LEA and government level;
- providing **comparative information** to parents about schools in an area to inform choices;
- providing **specific information** to parents about their own child's performance;
- providing **public information** about the performance in a given school or area; and
- providing **transition information** for other phases about progress made by pupils in key stage 1.

4.1.3 In making judgements on pupils' progress throughout, or at the end of the key stage, teachers need to be accurate and consistent. This is critical to the information generated being used effectively.

4.1.4 At the end of key stage 1, most teachers make judgements about pupils' progress based on evidence collected throughout the key stage and they use this to make a summative judgement. The good knowledge teachers have of key stage 1 pupils, together with on-going assessment, enable teachers to provide comprehensive details of pupils' progress.

4.1.5 A few teachers still perceive that assessment is dominated by the end of key stage 1 summative process. These teachers feel that assessment is mostly about:

- providing a National Curriculum level in the core subjects;
- the measuring of standards; and
- the collection of data.

They see the formative aspects of teacher assessment, including identifying pupils' strengths and weaknesses in an on-going way and adjusting learning in the light of this, as of less significance.

4.2 Benefits of the removal of tasks and tests

4.2.1 The majority of key stage 1 teachers, and especially those in year 2, have welcomed the abolition of tasks and tests. They state that the abolition of tasks and tests provides them with:

- greater flexibility to ensure a breadth of curriculum provision, for example, in previous years the spring term was taken up by reinforcing work in readiness for the tests;
- opportunities to make a more accurate assessment of pupils by greater use of continuous assessment throughout their teaching programmes;
- opportunities to inform their teaching with modifications made in the light of this information;
- a renewed focus on assessment throughout the whole key stage and not only at the end; and
- a removal of the pressure on some schools, teachers and pupils from the high expectations of government, LEAs, managers and parents, as far as the tasks and tests were concerned.

4.2.2 In a few schools, however, teachers expressed some reservations about the abolition of tasks and tests because they often used the formal tests to confirm the accuracy of their own teacher assessments.

4.2.3 Most teachers recognise the significant advantages of teacher assessment, as opposed to tasks and tests, because they can:

- use it to cover the full range of the National Curriculum programmes of study;
- include a broader range of assessment opportunities;
- integrate it effectively into the teaching and learning process;
- use it in a formative, and not merely a summative way; and
- base it on observation and discussions with pupils in a wide range of classroom contexts.

4.3 The link between teacher assessment and teaching and learning

4.3.1 Most teachers feel that they have integrated assessment effectively into the teaching and learning process. Many schools have been successful at doing this by:

- developing workable and manageable systems for assessing and recording pupils' achievements;
- planning opportunities for assessment based on clear learning objectives;
- recognising that not all learning needs to be formally assessed;
- making regular assessments of pupils' progress throughout the key stage in the core subjects. The assessments are built around questioning, observation and good quality marking that provides pupils with information on what they need to do to improve their work;
- tracking pupils' progress throughout the school;
- setting challenging targets for improvement for all pupils, usually in English and mathematics, and indicate what pupils need to do to improve. In the best practice, pupils are encouraged to help set their own targets and all targets are conveyed to parents;
- providing opportunities for teachers to meet regularly to plan and adjust pupils' work in the light of the assessment information collected;
- having a clear idea of the standards and expectations of pupils appropriate to their age and to the level descriptions of the National Curriculum;
- making consistently accurate and reliable assessments of pupils' achievements;
- subject leaders helping teachers to produce moderated portfolios of pupils' work in the core and sometimes non-core foundation subjects in line with National Curriculum expectations;
- using assessment information effectively to guide planning for pupils' future learning, especially in English and mathematics; and
- analysing and making use of assessment information to:
 - evaluate the overall standards of achievement in the school;
 - measure the school's performance against the best; and
 - compare themselves to other similar schools.

4.4 The moderation of pupils' work

4.4.1 All teachers recognise that assessment will be more effective and accurate if they:

- have a clear understanding of the National Curriculum level descriptions and how to apply them in practice; and
- judge pupils' work in a consistent way, with a shared understanding of standards. These judgements would need to be developed through a regular process of meetings and discussions and by referring to exemplification materials.

4.4.2 Teachers also recognise that a well-planned strategy for the moderation of pupils' work would help them to be confident in the accuracy and consistency of their assessments. They feel that moderation should be an integral part of curriculum development within and between schools.

4.4.3 Moderation discussions help teachers award levels in line with the National Curriculum level descriptions. The level descriptions describe the types and range of performance that pupils working at a particular level should characteristically demonstrate. In deciding on a pupil's level of attainment, teachers will judge which description best fits the pupil's performance overall and will consider each description in conjunction with the descriptions for adjacent levels.

4.4.4 Good practice in schools in the process of moderation includes:

- regular meetings to discuss pupils' work;
- comparing pupils' attainment with the criteria of the National Curriculum level descriptions;
- allocating levels to pupils' work and deciding why work best fits a particular level; and
- meeting colleagues from other phases to consider and agree the judgements made.

4.4.5 In one school, pupils' work was annotated and considered in one of 3 categories – good, average or below average – but the work was not levelled in line with National Curriculum expectations. This process is of limited value.

4.4.6 In the schools surveyed, the frequency of moderation sessions varied considerably. All schools took part in some moderation sessions. However, in some schools this only took place once a year, while in others, the process was undertaken much more often. In one school discussions of pupils' work took place monthly, at staff meetings. Most schools use a combination of staff meeting and school-based training time for the moderation process.

4.4.7 In all schools surveyed, all teachers are involved in the process of moderation. In a small number of schools learning support assistants are also involved.

Case study 1 – involving all staff in assessment

This case study focuses on how all staff are involved in the assessment process so that the assessments made are accurate and consistent.

An infant school involves all staff in the assessment process to ensure that the assessments made are accurate and consistent with National Curriculum criteria

Teachers in the school welcomed the abolition of tasks and tests. However, although the school has experienced teachers who have a firm understanding of the National Curriculum levels and the criteria associated with them, changes in staffing meant that some staff were uncertain about allocating levels to pupils' work.

With this in mind, the school planned to ensure that all staff had a shared understanding of National Curriculum levels. The school feels that this is important, not only at the end of the key stage, but throughout the key stage. The school believes that its accurate tracking of pupils' progress and effective target setting is dependent on all staff having a clear idea of what the levels mean.

All staff, including support staff who help to support pupils' learning, are involved in moderation sessions twice a term. At these meetings, pupils' work is discussed and levels awarded to the work in the light of the criteria contained in the National Curriculum level descriptions. Subject leaders then retain this levelled work in subject portfolios.

The school has portfolios of assessed work in all National Curriculum core and non-core foundation subjects. These are available as reference documents for the staff and they provide a clear interpretation of the school's agreed view of levels.

The infant school has also involved its partner junior school in this process. By doing this, the school is confident that the levels it is awarding to pupils' work are clearly understood by all the staff and these levels are agreed with key stage 2 staff also.

4.4.8 The focus of moderation activities usually involves work in English and mathematics. However, a small number of schools also discuss work in science and the non-core foundation subjects of the National Curriculum.

4.4.9 In a small number of cases, moderation activities involve teachers from several local schools coming together to share judgements. These teachers

all usually work within key stage 1. However, in some cases teachers from key stage 2 also take part in the activity.

Case study 2 - a focus on moderation

This case study shows how one school ensures that the assessments they are making are accurate and consistent with external standards.

In a large infants school, there are good strategies in place to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the teacher assessments being made at the end of key stage 1.

Assessment is well planned and each teacher in the school plays a part in the on-going assessments that are made on each pupil in English, mathematics and science.

All staff receive regular in-house training from the assessment co-ordinator and a year 2 teacher in the school. They meet each term to discuss the assessment of individual pupils' work and to decide on the National Curriculum levels that the work exemplifies. Some examples of work are kept and included in a portfolio of evidence that the school uses to illustrate pupils' work at different National Curriculum levels.

The school has examples of pupils' work in the National Curriculum levels for all core subjects and these are used as guides for teachers when teacher assessments are being finalised.

The school also uses optional assessment materials produced by ACCAC. These materials are used effectively to support teacher assessment. Pupils and teachers like the materials and using them gives teachers confidence in the judgements they are making.

Through a variety of processes the school is confident that pupils' work is levelled accurately and that the levels are consistent with external standards exemplified by ACCAC.

4.5 Portfolios of assessed work

4.5.1 At key stage 1, most schools have portfolios of assessed pupils' work that reflect the range of National Curriculum levels appropriate to the key stage. These portfolios are usually put together following agreement between teachers during moderation activities.

4.5.2 The portfolios typically contain examples of pupils' work in English, mathematics and science. In the best examples, the work has been discussed by all teachers and levels agreed and samples of annotated work at a range of levels are usually included. Useful annotations refer to the

characteristics of the work that place it in a certain level and, if appropriate, itemise the reasons for the work not being placed in adjacent levels.

4.5.3 In some schools, teachers have only recently started to put together portfolios of assessed pupils' work in the core subjects and to use them to inform teachers' expectations of standards in relation to the National Curriculum. In other schools, although subject leaders have put together portfolios of assessed pupils' work that exemplify the different levels, because all teachers have not discussed these, they are of limited value in ensuring the accuracy and consistency of assessment.

4.5.4 In a small number of schools, portfolios of assessed work are available in all the core subjects and the non-core foundation subjects of the National Curriculum.

4.6 Support for assessment from LEAs

4.6.1 The amount of support provided to schools for assessment in key stage 1 varies considerably across Wales. Schools rely on LEAs to provide them with assessment support in four major areas:

- opportunities for moderation between schools;
- training for assessment;
- external verification of the levels they award to pupils' work; and
- the analysis of assessment information.

4.6.2 Opportunities provided by LEAs for moderation between schools are few. LEAs recognise that teachers benefit from good quality discussions based on the requirements of teacher assessment. However, within the funding allocated for teachers' professional development this activity has not been given high priority. Most schools reported that they had not engaged in moderation activities with other schools during the last two years. In a small number of LEAs, some discussion of pupils' work in English is a feature of staff development activities run by advisory teachers.

4.6.3 All LEAs offer some form of training for key stage 1 teachers. However, the range of the training provided varies considerably.

4.6.4 Schools rely heavily on LEAs to quality assure the work they do. In the past, teachers have had their assessments audited at the end of the key stage. Audit moderators from the LEA visited schools to ensure that the judgements made about pupils' attainments were accurate and consistent with national expectations. All LEAs had a planned programme of visits to all infant, primary and special schools with key stage 1 pupils. Since the abolition of the tasks and tests, this quality assurance programme for schools has become irregular and the majority of schools state that the assessments

they are making now are not verified. Many schools relied on the tasks and tests to provide confirmation of teacher assessment levels. Teachers now feel that, at a time they need more support from LEAs to quality assure their assessments, there is actually less support available.

4.6.5 Most LEAs provide schools with an effective analysis of assessment information. In some LEAs, the analysis of this information is extremely detailed. In LEAs where the analysis is very effective it includes comparison:

- by subject;
- by gender;
- with other similar schools in the LEA;
- with national statistics;
- with the schools own targets for improvement; and
- progress year-on-year.

4.6.6 In the best examples, an adviser meets annually with the governors to review school progress. Part of this process involves the analysis of school data and what this data indicates about trends over time and how well the school is doing compared to other similar schools.

4.7 How teacher assessment could be improved – the view of schools

4.7.1 All schools made suggestions about how they thought the teacher assessment process could be improved. Although most schools feel that the assessments they are currently making are accurate, many expressed concern regarding the need to maintain the quality, accuracy and consistency of teacher assessment in the long term. Measures to ensure this might include:

- more school based moderation to ensure that all teachers were awarding levels accurately;
- moderation meetings where staff from a range of different schools can meet to consider the levels awarded to pupils' work. This could result in the production of portfolios of assessed work within a cluster of schools;
- external verification of the levels awarded to pupils' work at the end of the key stage. This was felt to be essential if teachers and parents are to continue to have confidence in the assessment system;

- an appropriate range of in-service training courses to update teachers on assessment skills;
- further exemplification materials from ACCAC that consider the type and range of performance that pupils working at a particular level should characteristically demonstrate. Schools stated that they need particular help to consider pupils' work that fell on the threshold between two levels; and
- more optional assessment materials from ACCAC. Teachers felt that these gave a focus to the work in key stage 1 and provided teachers with confidence to award National Curriculum levels appropriately.

5. The current position in local education authorities

5.1 Background

5.1.1 Most LEAs welcomed the decision to remove the statutory tasks and tests at key stage 1. They see this as a positive move as there is a greater emphasis on teachers' own assessments of pupils' progress. They feel that the assessment process is now in the hands of teachers whose knowledge of assessment techniques will appropriately inform future teaching and learning.

5.1.2 Some LEAs state that they can already see the benefits of the new arrangements in schools. They refer, in particular, to two unsatisfactory features related to the tasks and tests that have now largely disappeared:

- the over emphasis on the core subjects to the detriment of other non-core foundation subjects; and
- too much time spent at the end of key stage 1 on assessment.

5.1.3 Despite the concerns of some teachers, LEAs generally feel that the teachers in their schools are regaining confidence in assessing their pupils. For many years it was implied that only National Curriculum tasks and tests could give an accurate indication of pupils' abilities, and, consequently, teachers lost confidence in their own assessment capabilities. Now, they no longer are able to use tasks and tests to confirm their findings, but are using on-going assessment techniques that they can use to inform pupils' future learning.

5.1.4 Some LEAs feel that the abolition of the tasks and tests has resulted in no real change in key stage 1. These LEAs feel that the adverse effects of testing pupils have been over exaggerated. However, although LEAs generally perceive that there was limited value in end of key stage tasks and tests they consider that the data generated was particularly useful for them to provide benchmark information on school performance.

5.1.5 A small number of LEAs indicated that, in some schools, the abolition of tasks and tests has had an adverse impact on workload. Some teachers feel insecure in the judgements they are making and have resorted to using a range of commercially produced assessments including standardised tests. In a few schools, the volume of assessment materials used has increased with a consequent increase in workload.

5.2 Strategies and opportunities for moderation between schools

5.2.1 Some LEAs provide a range of opportunities for teachers to moderate pupils' work. This usually involves teachers from across an LEA working together to discuss and agree the levels awarded to pupils' work.

5.2.2 All LEAs undertook these types of activities prior to the abolition of tasks and tests. They were seen as central to the quality assurance role of the LEA in verifying the accuracy of teacher assessment at key stage 1. However, the current picture is a very mixed one. Some LEAs currently do not organise any sort of moderation activities for teachers. Nevertheless, in others, this process is undertaken each year for English, mathematics and science with all year 2 teachers. A number of LEAs involve more than one person from each school in centrally arranged moderation activities while in others the number of teachers involved is very limited.

5.2.3 Although there is some exchange of teachers' judgements between cluster groups of schools, none of the LEAs surveyed engaged specifically in inter-LEA moderation activities.

5.3 Support for the development of subject portfolios

5.3.1 LEAs can support teachers' assessments at key stage 1 by producing LEA portfolios of assessed pupils' work. These can provide teachers with examples of pupils' work from schools across the LEA that have been levelled in line with National Curriculum expectations. These portfolios are sometimes available on the LEAs' websites and can help teachers to 'benchmark' the work of their own pupils against exemplification material that has been agreed at an LEA level.

5.3.2 A small number of LEAs have produced portfolios of work in English and mathematics and have involved teachers in the work. In one LEA, they are currently developing a portfolio for writing and are using teachers to bring together examples of pupils' writing from their own schools. The portfolio will contain examples of pupils' writing at different levels and illustrating progress from the Early Years to key stage 3.

5.3.3 Although some LEAs do not produce specific portfolios of assessed work, they:

- encourage schools to produce their own portfolios;

- offer training for the development of portfolios based on a clear rationale; and
- provide advice on the management of a collection of pupils' work across the key stage.

5.3.4 In some LEAs, there are no activities centred around the development of portfolios of assessed work at key stage 1. LEAs state that this is because either:

- they do not have enough staff with the necessary expertise to organise these activities; or
- within their in-service training programmes, schools do not give enough priority to releasing teachers to allow discussions, that are centred around pupils' work, to take place.

5.4 Assessment training

5.4.1 All LEAs offer some form of training to key stage 1 teachers but the range of the training provided varies considerably.

5.4.2 In LEAs with the greatest range of key stage 1 training opportunities, there are courses for teachers in:

- generic assessment issues, including marking and pupils' self assessment;
- the use of optional assessment materials produced by ACCAC;
- assessment practice, particularly in English and mathematics;
- the analysis and use of assessment information; and
- using baseline assessment in the Early Years.

There are also courses for new and existing assessment co-ordinators. Each year, many LEAs provide training for teachers in the preparation for end of key stage assessments.

5.4.3 However, in some LEAs the range of assessment training for key stage 1 teachers is very limited. In these LEAs, the key stage 1 teachers are not updating their assessment skills and are not discussing assessment issues with teachers from other schools.

5.4.4 Where programmes of in-service training are offered, LEAs report that the take-up of the training is good. However, fewer experienced year 2

teachers now attend training events and year 1 and reception are underrepresented. This may be because schools are prioritising training to accommodate those they perceive to have most need. Consequently, the take-up of all aspects of assessment training is highest amongst inexperienced year 2 teachers and newly qualified teachers.

5.4.5 In all LEAs, the training strategy is mainly financed through the GEST programme. Some LEAs retain money centrally for assessment training while others devolve the funding to schools.

5.5 Quality assurance processes

5.5.1 Very few LEAs now have strategies to ensure the accuracy and consistency of teacher assessment across their schools.

5.5.2 Prior to the abolition of tasks and tests, LEAs audited end of key stage 1 assessments across all schools. Audit moderators from the LEA visited schools to ensure that the judgements made about pupils' attainment were accurate and consistent with national expectations.

5.5.3 The current situation in LEAs is as follows:

- some LEAs provide no check on the accuracy of teacher assessment in their schools;
- some LEAs visit a sample of schools to check assessments and discuss issues with staff;
- some LEAs do not visit schools but undertake a postal audit of assessment. Experienced audit/moderators are used to confirm the postal sample submitted by schools.

Case Study 3 – quality assurance in an LEA

This case study shows how one LEA has tried to quality assure assessment at key stage 1 through a process of visits and the sampling of pupils' work.

One large LEA in south east Wales has recently undertaken a key stage 1 teacher assessment quality assurance survey. This involved visits to 15 schools by the advisory teacher in charge of assessment. Each visit to a school involved a focus based on the following 6 key questions relating to the processes involved in reaching judgements about National Curriculum levels awarded to pupils:

1. What evidence has the teacher drawn on to make judgements about an end of key stage level?
2. Does the school undertake its own moderation within the core subjects?

3. Does the school have in place portfolios for the core subjects?
4. Has the teacher attended any of the LEA courses on moderation at key stage 1? When?
5. Does the school utilise the optional assessment materials from ACCAC? If yes, how? and, most importantly
6. Are the judgements made accurate in terms of the level descriptors for the levels awarded?

Schools visited were also requested to send samples of work, in English, mathematics and science, to the LEA for scrutiny. These samples were examined by LEA staff to gauge the validity of the levels awarded by the schools. The results of this quality assurance process were reported back to each school.

Schools found the quality assurance survey very useful. The results of the survey either confirmed judgements or identified areas where improvements and refinements were needed. The survey also enabled the schools involved to be confident in the teacher assessment judgements they were making.

The LEA found the survey useful as it has helped them to identify the strengths and weaknesses of teacher assessment two years after tasks and tests have been abolished. Although the survey was informed by a fairly small sample of schools, assessment subject areas that need to be improved have been identified and the LEA intends to make these the focus of in-service training courses.

5.6 How teacher assessment could be improved – the view of LEAs

5.6.1 A number of LEAs expressed the view that a series of measures would be needed in the future to maintain the quality of teacher assessment in schools. They felt that this would be necessary, not least, to maintain the robustness and consistency of the end of key stage teacher assessment data to provide a sound basis for comparative purposes, value-added measures and target-setting processes.

5.6.2 Some of the suggestions for improvement were that:

- extra funding should be available through GEST for more regular training and support for assessment;
- moderation activities should be itemised within the GEST programme and given enough funding to maintain an effective system that will ensure the accurate levelling of pupils' work takes place. LEAs recognise that teachers benefit from good quality discussions based on the requirements of teacher assessment;

- robust quality assurance processes, involving visits to schools and professional dialogue with teachers about pupils' work and the levels awarded, were needed. LEAs surveyed stated that, without being able to visit schools and sample assessments, they would not know how accurate and consistent teacher assessment is. They further referred to the fact that these processes would need to take account of issues concerning workload and the bureaucratic burden; and
- ACCAC should provide further support for teachers in the form of exemplification materials including web-based materials.

6. The use of materials to support assessment

6.1 ACCAC has a central role in Wales in supporting accurate and consistent teacher assessment at key stage 1. All schools surveyed were using ACCAC materials in one form or another to support the judgements they were making of pupils' progress in line with National Curriculum expectations.

6.2 Schools' choice of materials is often influenced by information received during in-service training sessions, from LEAs, during headteacher meetings and from adviser visits to the schools.

6.3 Since the abolition of tasks and tests at key stage 1 schools have increasingly used a range of materials from ACCAC to support teacher assessment. These include:

- previous tasks and tests – these consist of a comprehensive range of materials that were previously used to make judgements on pupils' at the end of the key stage. These are still used fairly extensively in schools. They are used either at the end of the key stage in the way that tasks and tests were originally designed or they are incorporated into the teaching and learning process and used throughout the key stage to suit the assessment of a particular aspect of work;
- optional assessment materials (OAMs) - in 2003, ACCAC published OAMS in English, Welsh and mathematics. These were developed to support on-going teacher assessment and to help give greater consistency in end of key stage judgements. The majority of schools are aware of, and use, OAMs as they consider that these materials provide them with a good reference to National Curriculum levels. More use is made of OAMs in some schools than in others and this reflects the influence of the LEA, as some more than others firmly recommend their use; and
- exemplification materials – produced in the late 1990's in English, mathematics and science. These have been used extensively in schools to support judgements made by teachers. The materials contain examples of pupils' work that have been awarded levels. The annotations included in the text explain why a particular level has been awarded and the main criteria that

the work illustrates. Many schools have used the exemplification materials in moderation sessions and for school based in-service training. Unfortunately, these materials are now out of print.

6.4 Other sources of materials – a variety of other materials are also used in schools to support teacher assessment activities. These include:

- Commercial assessment material – publishing companies have developed assessment materials, usually attached to published schemes of work in the core subject areas. Schools are selective in their use;
- LEA materials - schools in some areas are well supported by LEA services. Some LEAs produce very useful materials for assessment but few produce any materials specifically for key stage 1. With this in mind, most LEAs recommend that schools use ACCAC materials;
- The Qualifications and Assessment Authority (QCA) in England produce materials. Schools are aware of these and use them occasionally;
- Standardised tests - almost all schools now use standardised tests in English and mathematics at some stage in the infant school. These are used for a variety of purposes including:
 - the identification of pupils' learning needs;
 - confirmation of teacher assessment levels; and
 - to provide school data on English and mathematics to the LEA.

Some schools use these tests primarily to confirm their teacher assessments as the tests often claim that the score outcomes can be correlated with National Curriculum levels and can therefore be used to confirm judgements. Some schools use these tests in year 1 for the purpose of target setting. A number of LEAs strongly encourage their schools to use standardised tests, particularly in English and mathematics, to inform on standards across the LEA and for schools to be able to measure the progress of their pupils; and

- Reading tests – schools use a variety of reading tests. In the main, the choice of tests is determined by LEA policies and the requirements set by the LEA to gather information on reading scores and reading ability across their schools.

