National
Assessment
Agency

Report on the 2007 key stage 3 ICT test pilot

Contents

1 Introduction

The 2007 pilot of the onscreen key stage 3 test for information and communication technology (ICT) was planned to be the last pilot prior to the test becoming statutory in 2008. The National Assessment Agency (NAA), working with the Secondary National Strategy (SNS), had been strongly encouraging schools to participate in the pilots to ensure they would be fully prepared for 2008. The expectation was that all schools would take part in the 2007 pilot and that they would enter all pupils working at national curriculum level 3 or above for the test.

In November 2006 the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) advised the secretary of state that the test should not become statutory but should instead be used as a non-statutory tool to support teacher assessment. Reasons underpinning this advice included concern about the number of initiatives involving ICT in schools, the demands of an additional statutory national curriculum test, and the readiness of schools to deliver a compulsory e-assessment. The advice included a recommendation that the software developed to deliver the key stage 3 ICT test into schools and to return results should be made more widely available for the delivery of other tests and examinations, where appropriate.

The secretary of state accepted QCA's advice and a change of focus for the key stage 3 ICT test was announced at the BETT show in January 2007. The education minister announced that a refocused test would be developed to provide assessments that schools could use at any time throughout the key stage to help pupils to make progress.

The Department for Education and Skills (now the Department for Children, Schools and Families) notified schools of the change in status of the test in early January 2007. It was agreed that the 2007 pilot would go ahead as planned because many schools had already begun their preparations. It was also felt that further piloting of the test delivery software and the software used in the test would be beneficial in ironing out any remaining problems, given that both sets of software would be used for the new assessment materials. However, in recognition of the changed status of the test the NAA and SNS suggested that schools might wish to consider entering a subset of their pupils for the pilot rather than a complete cohort if this would make test administration easier.

The resultant pilot test was taken by pupils in a four-week test window from 30 April to 25 May 2007. Despite the change of status, more than 124,000 pupils in nearly 1,200

schools took the test and received results, compared with more than 172,000 pupils and 1,700 schools in 2006. Given the change of status of the 2007 test, these figures substantially exceeded expectations for participation.

This report on the 2007 pilot provides information about the main findings in 2007 and the issues to be taken forward in the development and delivery of the refocused key stage 3 ICT assessment materials.

2 Accreditation and participation

The accreditation process

To take part in key stage 3 ICT test pilots, schools were required to become approved test centres. The reason for this was to ensure that schools were technically able to run the test-delivery software and the test itself. To become an approved centre a school had to successfully complete an accreditation process. This involved an audit of the school network to check that it met the minimum technical specification and required network throughput.

By the end of the 2006 pilot over 3,000 schools in England with key stage 3 pupils had been accredited. During the run up to the 2007 pilot an additional 191 schools were accredited. These included schools using the thin-client version of the delivery point system (DPS) software, which was made available for the first time from April 2007. As in previous years, schools having difficulty with accreditation from a technical perspective could get advice from Becta.

The NAA received low levels of feedback about accreditation this year but the level of calls to the customer service and technical support teams suggests that the process continued to work well. This is encouraging as accreditation will continue to be needed for the new assessment tasks and will also be a requirement if the delivery software is made available for wider use.

Communication with schools

As in 2006, the majority of communications about the test pilot were sent by email directly to named contacts provided by schools. Generally this worked well, although it was clear that the contact details held were not always up to date as schools had not always notified us about changes in personnel. In some cases this led to key personnel not being aware of important

information or of the materials available to support them. Until early 2007 schools needed to contact the customer service team to update contact details. At the beginning of 2007 new functionality was added to enable schools to make changes themselves via the secure test website: www.naa.org.uk/ks3ict. It is too early to determine whether or not this has been successful but we hope it will make it easier for schools to keep their information up to date.

In addition to email communications, the NAA launched a termly newsletter about the test. *Countdown* was designed to encourage schools and help them plan and prepare for statutory testing by making it clear where they were in their preparations (the 'countdown' to the test) and what actions they needed to take to be fully prepared. Schools received different versions of the newsletter depending on their progress. The newsletters were also customised with the name of the school. Copies were sent to the headteacher and ICT coordinator in all schools with end of key stage 3 pupils. *Countdown* could also be received electronically.

Feedback about *Countdown* has been very positive. Schools have reported that they find it 'useful and informative' and that the format works well. We therefore plan to continue to release *Countdown* termly as a vehicle to keep schools informed about the new assessment materials. Although we are no longer 'counting down' we plan to keep the existing title as schools are familiar with it and recognise its association with key stage 3 ICT assessments from the NAA.

Participation

Following the January announcement it was difficult to predict how many schools and pupils would continue with the pilot. We hoped the majority of schools would participate to some degree as this would mean they would be ready for the new assessment materials when they were launched in autumn 2007. We were concerned that schools might opt out of the pilot and uninstall the software, and that this would mean added work for them when the new assessment tasks started. Until January 2007 the message to schools was to enter all key stage 3 pupils who were eligible to take the test. Many schools were planning for this and there were signs of the increasing involvement of exams officers in test scheduling and the recruitment of external invigilators.

Following the announcement that the tests would not be statutory, some headteachers decided that participation was no longer a priority for their school and restricted or ended the involvement of the exams officer. The use of external invigilators was also withdrawn in some cases. Recognising that full participation may therefore now be very difficult for some schools, the NAA, supported by the SNS, suggested that schools might prefer to take part with a

smaller number of pupils, perhaps one or two classes, so that test sessions could be fitted into the normal timetable for ICT lessons and the delivery of the curriculum.

At the start of the test window on 30 April, 2,491 schools had installed the delivery software and 1,987 had also downloaded the test. By the end of the window these figures had risen to 2,558 and 2,229 respectively. Of these 1,196 schools ran summative test sessions. The number of pupils completing tests was 124,556.

Although some schools did enter a small sample of their pupils, many schools entered substantial numbers of pupils or their complete year group. Six hundred schools entered 100 pupils or more and 125 schools entered 200 pupils or more. The largest entry from a single school was 433 pupils. This level of participation was very positive and showed the enthusiasm and support for ICT e-assessment in many schools. Feedback from schools revealed a number of reasons for continued participation.

- The school wanted to test the server again to prepare for onscreen testing in the future.
- The school had already planned for the pilot and the pupils were expecting it – not taking part was seen as letting the pupils down or disappointing them.
- The results that would come out of the test were a convenient way of moderating teacher assessment across departments.

3 The key stage 3 ICT delivery software

Software changes

As a result of the 2006 pilot and the lessons learned, revisions were made to various aspects of the delivery software. The purpose of the changes for the 2007 pilot was to stabilise the admin point system (APS) and DPS software without making any major changes to functionality. However, some changes were made to streamline processes for schools. For example, the pupil data import function in the APS allowed the filtering of pupils by year group and also allowed schools to mark pupils not present in the current 'School Census' file as having left the school. A response status table was added to the APS homepage to enable schools to see at a glance how many pupil responses had been loaded for each summative test. These changes and others were implemented following school feedback from 2006. For the first time a thin-client version of the DPS software was also available to schools. This was in addition to the Windows version of the DPS software and the Windows and Red Hat Linux versions of the APS software.

Installing and upgrading the software

New installations of the software and upgrades from previous versions went well. By the end of the 2007 pilot over 2,500 schools had installed the 2007 version of the software. Although a substantial number of calls were made to the technical support team, the majority were enquiries about how to carry out activities rather than reports of actual problems. This suggests that some schools were not utilising the information provided in the training guides, preferring to phone for help instead. For example, some schools encountered installation problems because server prerequisites had not been met. Others encountered failed installations because they had not taken account of advice provided in release notes. Moving forward, the NAA needs to continue to increase awareness of release notes and the content of the software training guides among all contacts put forward by schools.

Delivery software performance

School feedback and analysis of the service calls made during the 2007 pilot do not show the need for any additional functionality within the APS. The improvements made to existing functionality for 2007 also reduced the need for schools to seek help with tasks such as importing 'School Census' data and modifying existing pupil records.

During the pilot the delivery software performed well. For many schools the comment, 'the test session went very smoothly', accurately reflected their experiences. This was not the case for all schools, however. In some cases this was down to local network problems. There were also three issues that emerged during the test window that each affected more than one school. First, fourteen schools reported that the second session of the test launched and ended almost immediately. The second problem was encountered by three schools that could not log pupils onto the first summative test session.

The third issue was more widespread, with 134 schools reporting problems when some pupils attempted to log onto the second test session. To prevent schools encountering this issue a software update was released to schools at the beginning of the second week of the test window. Schools that had encountered the problem were also offered the possibility of affected pupils resitting session 1 of the test so that they could take a complete test and receive a result. The release of the software update during the window was not ideal, but as the majority of schools did not take the test until weeks 3 and 4 of the window it did prevent most from encountering the problem. We will be working to resolve these issues with the software, although they will not affect delivery of the new assessment tasks as these only have a single session.

A second trial of the thin-client version of the DPS software took place in the early part of the academic year for those schools not using Windows workstations. This version of the software was then made generally available just before the test window. Fourteen schools installed the thin-client software and five of these took part in the pilot. No technical problems specific to this version of the software were raised by the schools.

In 2006 some schools were unable to receive results electronically because they had uninstalled the delivery software. In 2007 the NAA stressed the undesirability of uninstalling the software more strongly and as a result few schools uninstalled the software. Those that did, needed to do so to address local technical problems and contacted the technical support team for advice beforehand. Schools generally did not uninstall the software over the summer break in 2007, meaning that they were well placed to receive the new software and assessment tasks when the tasks were released in the autumn term.

4 Preparation and planning

Staff preparation and planning

During the summer and autumn terms of 2006 the NAA encouraged more schools to take part in the 2007 pilot. There was a strong emphasis on the need for teamwork and planning in schools, and for a member of the senior leadership team to be involved as well as the ICT subject leader, the network manager and the exams officer. Until summer 2006 few exams officers had been involved at all. This changed as the NAA field force visited exams officers in schools and ensured they were aware of the key stage 3 ICT test and of what their involvement might be.

As in previous years, the NAA provided a range of training materials to help schools prepare for the 2007 pilot. These materials included guides aimed at network managers as well as ones aimed at those managing and running the tests. An analysis of the calls made by schools suggests that these materials were still not being used effectively – many of the calls made to the support teams related to questions such as, 'How do I do...?' or 'Where can I find...?', the answers to which were in the guides.

The NAA produced a new support booklet for 2007: *The essential guide: Preparing your school for the key stage 3 ICT test 2006/7*. Four copies of this guide were sent to every school with end of key stage 3 pupils – one copy each for the ICT subject leader, a senior leadership team member, the exams officer and the network manager. Supplementary materials were provided on the NAA website. The guide aimed to provide schools with a road map, taking

them from the beginning of the autumn term through to running a successful pilot test in the following summer term. The guide included case studies from schools that were already involved in pilots, and hints and tips for successful practice. Feedback from schools suggested that the guide was useful and was seen as a helpful tool for planning for the pilot.

Pupil preparation

Feedback from the SNS, focus groups and school visits suggests that the messages about the need to plan and prepare were getting through to schools, and many had built test preparation into their schemes of work. However, there continued to be concerns about the limited amount of curriculum time available for ICT and the impact of using some of that time for test preparation.

Teachers had differing views on the amount of time needed to prepare pupils. This was linked to differing perceptions about how much time pupils need to familiarise themselves with the ICT toolkit of applications used in the test. Some teachers suggested that they needed up to six months to prepare pupils. Others stated that they found two 50-minute sessions sufficient.

The 2007 pupil familiarisation materials test package set provided to schools was the first such set to include the new control applet and an associated task. The applet was included in the familiarisation test package set to give schools advance warning that the control applet would be used in future tests. School feedback on the applet and task was mixed. This will be reviewed as part of the development for the batch of new assessment tasks on control to be released in autumn 2008.

As in previous years, the pupil familiarisation test package set was supported by a PDF containing suggestions on how to familiarise pupils, along with some screen shots highlighting the menus and functionality for each of the applets in the toolkit. This year more schools were aware of this support and some had given copies of the screen shots to pupils to help with familiarisation. Schools were less aware of the PDF containing a copy of the help files provided in the toolkit. One school had used this file as a user guide for the software. The NAA will make sure schools have greater awareness of this resource as we go forward.

We also made revisions to the practice test, in particular, improving the quality of the reports received by pupils on completion of the second session. As in previous years, many schools found it difficult to fit two 50-minute practice test sessions into normal lessons. There was little evidence of schools having time to make use of the reports, particularly if they had chosen to run sessions close to the test window.

Test scheduling

To help schools carry out their preparations as early as possible the test dates were made available to schools on their APS earlier than in previous years – enabling schools to schedule test sessions in advance of the test window. The summative test package was also made available earlier than before. Despite this, most schools chose to carry out scheduling activities during the test window itself. Only 239 schools took advantage of the option to carry out scheduling earlier in the year and before the test window started.

Most schools ran the test in weeks 3 and 4 of the window. This was very similar to the pattern in the 2005 pilot when, as in 2007, week 2 of the window coincided with the key stage 3 tests in English, mathematics and science. As in 2005, many schools seem to have wanted pupils to take their compulsory tests before taking optional ones. As in previous pilots, the most popular options were for pupils to take both sessions on the same day, to take sessions one week apart or to take sessions two weeks apart.

5 The 2007 test

The test software

As with the delivery software, the priority for the test software in 2007 was stabilisation rather than change. The key exception to this was the addition of the control applet, although pupils were not required to use this during the test. The database applet was also redesigned to make its use more intuitive for pupils. Most of the remaining changes were to fix known software defects.

Schools reported few problems using the test software this year. A small number of schools encountered an issue with auto-deployment of the summative test when they tried to install the test automatically from the APS onto the DPS workstations. This was caused by an invalid instruction within the MSI file. A replacement test package set was quickly made available to schools to correct this and instructions for workarounds were also made available via a technical article on the test website. A second issue, reported by 15 schools, was the virtual web browser only displaying a blank page rather than the Pepsearch virtual search engine. The cause of this problem was not established during the test window but appeared to be linked to the configuration of workstations, networks and/or internet options within the schools concerned.

Test structure

As in 2006, there were two test tiers. The lower tier was targeted at national curriculum levels 3–5 and the upper tier at levels 4–6. Pupils were automatically allocated to a test tier by the test software depending on the initial level assessment that the school had input as part of their individual details. A pupil given an initial level assessment of level 3 or 4 would automatically be given a lower tier test. A pupil with level 5 or above would be given an upper tier test. There were also two versions of each test. These were randomly allocated by the software. Additionally, within each variant of the test there were different data sets, also randomly allocated. The purpose of this was to reduce the possibility of cheating by making it unlikely that pupils would find themselves sitting next to someone taking exactly the same variant of the test.

In 2006 some pupils had difficulty completing the test in the time allowed. This was particularly true of session one. For 2007 the test timings were reviewed and the amount of material presented to pupils reduced.

As in 2006, each test had two 50-minute sessions. Session 1 contained three tasks and session 2 contained two tasks. Some tasks were common to both tiers, reflecting the overlap of level coverage.

Tasks in the level 3–5 tier test

Task 1: Questions and activities

Pupils were asked to follow a hyperlink in the first task email to the first of five websites which contained either a question or a short activity:

1. Toy car commands – pupils were asked to identify the correct set of commands (from a list of choices) to control a toy car to the end of a track.

2. Mobile phones – in this activity, pupils had to use a hyperlink to open a database of mobile phone information used by a shop, add a data field, amend an entry and save their work.

3. Identify an information need – pupils were asked to select two ways (from a list of choices) in which ICT could be of advantage in running a shop.

4. Mail merge fields – pupils were asked to select two data fields (from a list of choices) to merge into a letter for a doctor to use to notify patients about upcoming appointments.

5. Museum visitors – in this activity, pupils had to use a hyperlink to open a spreadsheet that calculated the number of visitors to a museum each week. They had to correct an error, add conditional formatting and save their work.

Task 2: Healthy eating model

Pupils received an email from a leader at Pepford Youth Club asking them to answer questions in an attached spreadsheet model of the sales from the club's snack bar. When completed, the model needed to be able to calculate the profit, donations to charity and money left over for the club. To do this, pupils were expected to enter the answers into specified cells in the spreadsheet after making the necessary changes to the model. Pupils had to calculate the money given to charity, amend the sales for one product and recalculate the money given to charity, use formulae to calculate profit and money left over for the club and work out how many oranges needed to be sold to meet a profit target. Pupils were also asked to produce a graph from some sales figures. Pupils were then asked to insert the graph into a written report, which was also attached to the email, and answer some questions (selecting from the options provided).

Task 3: Music quiz presentation

Pupils received an email from a Pepford Youth Club leader asking them to complete a presentation to be used as a music quiz at the club. Attached were a spreadsheet of statistics about bands and artists and the half-completed presentation. Pupils were asked to amend a data entry in the spreadsheet for a specified artist by using a virtual internet to find the correct data, to add an appropriate picture of a band or artist to slide 9 of the presentation (also from the virtual internet), and to construct a graph in the spreadsheet that illustrates the answer to a question in the quiz. They then had to paste this graph into the correct slide of the presentation. Pupils then had to add a hyperlink button to slide 8 of the presentation, which took them to a new (correct) slide before saving their work.

Task 4: Tourist centre leaflet

Pupils received an email from the manager of Pepford Tourist Information Centre asking them to complete an attached leaflet, advertising a local water park, using old leaflets (accessible via hyperlink) as guides to the style and content. Pupils had to add a suitable image from the correct folder (accessible via the file-manager application), find and correct a mistake on the

leaflet using the internet, choose the best text for the leaflet from a specified document (also accessible via file manager) and format the leaflet appropriately. The completed leaflet then had to be sent as an email attachment to two people.

Task 5: Pepford Television presentation/database

Pupils received an email from the manager of Pepford Television station, PT TV, asking them to complete an attached presentation using the information in a customer service database (also attached) before saving their work. The areas where information was missing in the presentation were indicated by brackets. The information to be found was the age of the youngest or oldest person in the database, the number of people whose favourite type of programme was 'News', what type of programme was most popular among people within a particular age group, the number of men and women in a particular age group who watched the programme 'Vets' and whether, based on the data, more or fewer women than men would watch animal programmes. Pupils were asked to graph the favourite types of programme of people in a particular age group from the database and then to paste their graph into the presentation.

Tasks in the level 4–6 tier test

Task 1: Questions and activities

Pupils were asked to follow a hyperlink on the first task email to the first of five websites which contained either a question or a short activity:

1. Mobile phones – see task 1 in the level 3–5 tier.

2. Mail merge – see task 1 in the level 3–5 tier.

3. Museum visitors – see task 1 in the level 3–5 tier.

4. Interpreting graphs – pupils were asked to choose (from a list of choices) the best type of graph to show whether year 10 students get out of bed later than year 7 pupils in a school survey.

5. File transfer – for each of four scenarios regarding file or data transfer, pupils had to choose an action (from a list of choices) to complete the task in the most efficient way.

Task 2: Music quiz presentation

See task 3 in the level 3–5 tier.

Task 3: Healthy eating model

Pupils received an email from a leader at Pepford Youth Club asking them to open the attached 'Snack Bar spreadsheet' model and follow the instructions contained in this file. Pupils had to calculate the total number of items sold by the snack bar that week in a specified cell and to limit the range of the data entered in the 'number of items sold' column to between 0 and another specified value. Pupils were asked to amend the formula that calculates the money given to charity so that when the profit exceeded a certain value, the percentage of the profit given to charity increased from 25 per cent to 50 per cent. Pupils had to use some data on sheet 1 of the spreadsheet to complete a table on sheet 2, allowing for any future changes in the sheet 1 data. This was used to calculate the numbers of crisps and chocolate sold compared with the number of fruit sold that week, and pupils were asked to produce a graph showing sales of both kinds of food over the previous five weeks.

Task 4: Pepford Television presentation/database

See task 5 in the level 3–5 tier.

Task 5: Pepford School leaflet

Pupils received an email from the headteacher of Pepford Community School asking them to create a leaflet to promote healthy eating among year 7 pupils. Using the 'Healthy Eating Promotion' folder in file manager, pupils were told to review a style guide to the leaflets that informed them about the preferences of different groups for text, fonts, images and layout. Pupils were then expected to use this information to select an appropriate template from the 'Blank Leaflets' folder, to add the same headings used in a version of the leaflet that had been aimed at adults (available via the file manager application) and to select and paste appropriate text for the leaflet from the school's intranet site (accessible via a hyperlink). Pupils were also instructed to paste appropriate images into the leaflet from a folder provided and to paste in a URL of a website that would provide year 7 pupils with further information. Hyperlinks to four URLs were provided in the email and pupils needed to view them all and select the most appropriate one. Pupils were told to email the leaflet to the 'Governors' group when it was finished, before completing the 'Leaflet Evaluation Form' attached to the email. This form required pupils to select the three most appropriate ways of assessing the suitability of the leaflet from a list of choices. They then had to save the form in the 'My Files' folder.

Pupil performance in the tasks

Level 3–5 tier

Task 1

In this task pupil strengths were:

- understanding and using a hyperlink (level 3 evidence)
- saving a file in an appropriate folder (level 3 evidence)
- adding the video field to a database (level 4 evidence)
- identifying how ICT can be used to help run a small shop (level 4 evidence)
- identifying and correcting implausible data in a data file (level 4 evidence).

Pupil weaknesses were:

- identifying the correct sequence of control instructions (level 3 evidence)
- adding a new field to the database (level 3 evidence).

Task 2

In this task pupil strengths were:

- opening the attached documents (level 3 evidence)
- reading a value from the model and recording it correctly (level 3 evidence)
- changing a value in the model and recording the new profit figure (level 3 evidence)
- evaluating the impact of the healthy eating campaign (level 4 evidence)
- making correct predictions about week 6 from the model (level 5 evidence).

Pupil weaknesses were:

- creating simple formulae in the model to solve problems (level 4 evidence)
- using trial and improvement to solve a problem (level 4 evidence)
- creating appropriate graphs of data (level 3 and 4 evidence).

Task 3

In this task pupil strengths were:

- opening the attached document (level 3 evidence)
- using two sources to check information (level 5 evidence).

Pupil weaknesses were:

- searching the internet to find information using a relevant keyword or keywords (level 3 and 4 evidence)

- creating a graph using data in a spreadsheet to present information in a quiz (level 3 and 4 evidence).

Task 4

In this task pupil strengths were:

- opening the attached document (level 3 evidence)
- using a hyperlink to access the old leaflets (level 3 evidence)
- adding an appropriate image to the leaflet (level 4 evidence)
- adding text to the leaflet (level 3 evidence)
- adding the most suitable text to the leaflet (level 5 evidence)
- collecting data using a range of means (level 3 evidence).

Pupil weaknesses were:

- identifying implausible data and searching the internet for the correct data (level 3 and 4 evidence)
- saving the leaflet (level 3 evidence)
- sending the leaflet to two people (level 4 evidence).

Task 5

In this task pupil strengths were:

- opening the attached document (level 3 evidence)
- saving the presentation in an appropriate folder (level 3 evidence)
- searching the database using two appropriate criteria (level 5 evidence)
- adding appropriate information about the type of programmes people liked (level 5 evidence).

Pupil weaknesses were:

- searching the database to find the youngest/oldest person (level 3 evidence)
- creating a graph to include in a presentation (level 3 evidence).

Level 4–6 tier

Task 1

In this task pupil strengths were:

- adding the video field to the database (level 4 evidence)
- choosing the appropriate mail merge fields (level 5 evidence)

- selecting the most efficient method of solving various problems, including transferring files (level 6 evidence).

Pupil weaknesses were:

- using the correct data type for the video field (level 4 evidence)
- correcting the implausible data in the museum visitors spreadsheet (level 4 evidence)
- using conditional formatting to identify incorrect data in the spreadsheet (level 5 evidence).

Task 2

In this task pupil strengths were:

- using two relevant keywords to search the internet for an image (level 4 evidence)
- adding the action button to the appropriate slide (level 4 evidence).

Pupil weaknesses were:

- searching the internet and using two sources to select accurate data (level 5 evidence)
- creating a graph using appropriate data (level 5 evidence)
- adding an action button and linking it to the correct slide (level 5 evidence).

Task 3

In this task pupil strengths were:

- creating a formula to add up the profits (level 4 evidence)
- creating a formula to calculate 50 per cent and 25 per cent of the profit (level 5 evidence).

Pupil weaknesses were:

- using validation to highlight data entry errors (level 5 and 6 evidence)
- using the IF function correctly to solve a problem (level 6 evidence)
- copying the data to sheet 2 efficiently (level 5 and 6 evidence)
- creating an appropriate graph (level 5 evidence).

Task 4

In this task pupil strengths were:

- finding and adding the correct age for the youngest/oldest person (level 4 evidence)
- adding a graph that showed the favourite type of programme (level 5 evidence)
- using two criteria searches to solve a problem (level 5 evidence)
- using three criteria searches to solve a problem (level 6 evidence)

- identifying the number of males and females in a specific age group who liked a specific type of programme (level 6 evidence).

Pupil weaknesses were:
- sorting the database to find the correct age of the youngest/oldest person (level 4 evidence)
- finding and adding the correct number of people in a specific age group and identifying who liked a specific type of programme (level 5 evidence).

Task 5

In this task pupil strengths were:
- choosing some appropriate text for the audience (level 4 evidence)
- choosing most of the text suitable for the audience (level 6 evidence)
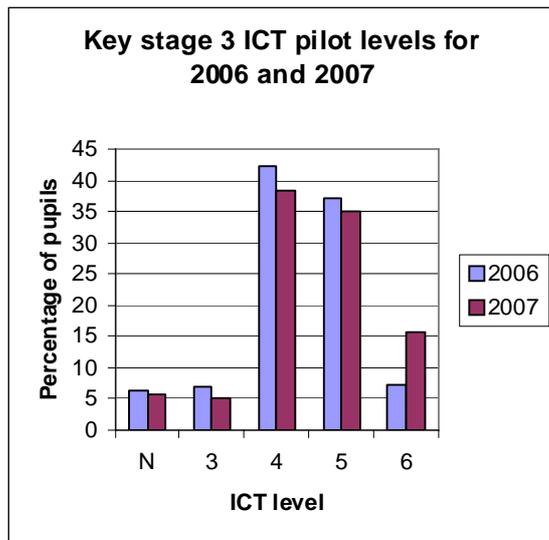- choosing two suitable ways of evaluating the leaflet (level 5 evidence).

Pupil weaknesses were:
- choosing appropriate images for the leaflet (level 4, 5 and 6 evidence)
- formatting the leaflet in a way that was suitable for the audience (level 4, 5 and 6 evidence)
- using an appropriate template for the audience (level 5 and 6 evidence)
- sending an email with the leaflet attached (level 4 evidence).

Note that in both tiers of the test, tasks 3 and 5 came at the end of the first and second sessions respectively. Some 'weaknesses' in pupil performance in these tasks may therefore be down to pupils not completing their answer rather than them not being able to demonstrate ICT capability in these particular areas.

Results

Results were made available to schools via automatic download onto the school's APS on Friday 6 July. In 2006 some schools had uninstalled the test delivery software meaning they could not receive results electronically. In 2007 the NAA increased the reminders to schools not to uninstall the software. The message seemed to have got through as only a handful of schools had uninstalled the software ahead of results release and in most cases these schools had sought advice from the technical support team first.

Key stage 3 ICT pilot levels for 2006 and 2007

Level	2006 (%)	2007 (%)
N	6.3	5.8
3	7	5.2
4	42.4	38.3
5	37.1	35
6	7.2	15.7

N = no level awarded.

The graph and table show the results for 2007 and 2006 for comparison. Overall, the 2007 results show improvement on those of 2006, with an increase in the percentage of pupils achieving level 6. In part this improvement is due to the pupils entered being judged by teachers to be of a slightly higher ability than those of the previous year.

Marking

As previously, the test was automatically marked. Following feedback in 2006 the NAA had planned to provide schools with full details about the marking. The change in status of the test meant that this did not happen. Instead details of marking, including the progression grid on which the automated marking is based, were held back for release alongside the new assessment tasks (see www.naa.org.uk/ks3ict).

6 Looking to the future

During 2007 the NAA worked with stakeholders to identify needs and preferences for the new assessment tasks that we had been asked to produce. The new tasks build on the findings from the key stage 3 ICT tests and the feedback from schools from the pilots and trials from 2004–7.

To have access to the tasks schools need to complete the accreditation process successfully. They must also install the latest version of the delivery software (an update was released at the beginning of November 2007). The update takes account of the fact that the tasks are for formative use and also includes new functionality to generate more detailed reports on both

the DPS and APS. A key difference is that because the tasks are designed to be used at any time during key stage 3 the scheduling of sessions is no longer required, so there is no need for a test administrator to manage sessions using the 'flight deck' view in the APS, nor do pupils need passwords.

The continued use of the delivery software means that schools can build on the experience they have gained during the pilots and they do not need to employ a new system. The software may also be used in the future to deliver other assessments and qualifications. The NAA is exploring this possibility with awarding bodies.

The new assessment tasks are short, stand-alone assessments designed to fit comfortably within normal lessons. They are intended to be used flexibly by teachers with their pupils at any time during key stage 3. The tasks use the same toolkit of applications that were used in the tests and have a less formal pupil interface to reflect the change from summative to formative assessment.

To support assessment for learning and pupil progression a range of support materials are also available for schools to use alongside the tasks. These include the progression grid and progression grid companion on which the automatic marking is based, as well as a version of the tasks that can be used outside of the task software. Full details of all the materials can be found on the NAA website www.naa.org.uk/ks3ict. Details of how to become accredited, the latest technical requirements and the release timetable for the tasks and support materials are also available from the site. The NAA is also continuing to communicate directly with schools both via email and also through the termly *Countdown* newsletter.