

## Beyond Expectations – Data Management

In March 2016, the Independent Teacher Workload Review Group published a report entitled 'Eliminating unnecessary workload associated with data management'. This short document summarises that report and provides a response for academies within DSAT.

We agree that when used well, data can have a profound and positive impact. They help teachers to teach, school leaders to focus on the right issues, inspectors to do their job and the Government to understand how the education system is performing. Too often, however, the collection of data becomes an end in itself, divorced from the core purpose of improving outcomes for pupils, often just to 'be ready' in case data are needed. This increases the workload of teachers and school leaders for little discernible benefit.

We are happy to adopt the following principles:

- a. Be streamlined: eliminate duplication – 'collect once, use many times';
- b. Be ruthless: only collect what is needed to support outcomes for children. The amount of data collected should be proportionate to its usefulness. Always ask why the data is needed;
- c. Be prepared to stop activity: do not assume that collection or analysis must continue just because it always has;
- d. Be aware of workload issues: consider not just how long it will take, but whether that time could be better spent on other tasks.

Clarification in relation to inspection is useful in that we have learned that there is no expectation for performance and pupil-tracking data to be presented in a particular format. Such data should be provided to inspectors in the format that the school would ordinarily use to track and monitor the progress of pupils in that school.

We will ask the following questions when developing our systems:

- Does our data management system align with our values and ethos?
- Are we focusing on the right things for our academies?
- What do we want to measure and why?
- What are our key issues?
- How does the data help us progress as a school?
- What are we expecting to find, and how would it enable us to change practice?
- What will we do with the data and when?
- What would happen – what could we not decide - without it?
- Will it be accurate, and what other sources will give a rounded picture of our pupils?
- Will the way we present our data make sense to those people who need to use it?
- Does this, or similar data, already exist?
- Are we getting the right data at the right time to make the right decisions?
- Can we provide assurance of the accuracy of our measurement – is the data valid?
- Can we stop collecting any data?
- What training is required and what can we learn from others?
- Over what time period will we collect it? When will we stop collecting it?
- Are we collecting data in ways to avoid reinterpretation or excessive workload?

The Commission on Assessment Without Levels stated that 'there is no intrinsic value in recording formative assessment; what matters is that it is acted on.' For this reason, every academy should make use of an assessment and data collection calendar, updated annually and led by the data collection requirement of the Trust. This ensures that all staff are clear about what is required, by when, and for what purpose, thereby helping them to plan more effectively and manage their

workload. The formative assessment we undertake, through our shared assessment system, should provide us with all the information that is required at a number of levels within the Trust. They always need to be tempered with overall professional judgement and data should always be reviewed with that in mind before submission.

Standardised tests – where these are used well, as part of an overall assessment scheme (particularly when accessing resources of an established quality) they can offer a quicker and less burdensome way for a teacher to check progress, to feed into a wider professional conversation. We will work with our Headteachers to identify the most appropriate resources and to ensure that as a Trust we are adopting the most cost-effective approaches in this respect.

The curriculum should inform how pupil learning should be recorded, progress tracked and what assessment is needed, not data processes defining the curriculum and learning.

We will always seek to collect data that are purposeful, valid, and reliable. We are happy to adopt the principles in the report to decide what to collect and how to collect it.

- Be prepared to stop collecting data if the burden of collection outweighs their use.
- Excessive data collection and processing takes teachers, school leaders, and officials away from more productive tasks.
- Use data in the format available. Do not ask for or duplicate collection of data collected elsewhere – ‘collect once, use many times.’
- Take measures to understand the cumulative impact on workload of new initiatives and guidance before rolling them out and make proportionate and pragmatic demands.

As a Trust and as School Leaders we will:

- Use software which adheres to common definitions and standards;
- Conduct a regular audit of in-school data management procedures to ensure they remain robust, valid and effective, and manageable for staff;
- Not routinely collect formative assessment data;
- Collect summative data only as frequently as is essential to ensure appropriate action can be taken in between collections. Unless there are issues of performance to address and monitor, summative data should not normally be collected more than three times a year per pupil;
- Review assessment which leads to data generation and consider a range of approaches (including standardised tasks/test items);
- Make data accessible to all stakeholders in an appropriate form;
- Do not collect data outside of agreed data collection points. Take a strategic view of the assessment demands throughout the school year and implement an assessment and data management calendar.

Local Governing Boards:

- Do not request data in any other format than that which the school regularly and routinely presents.
- Keep data requirements under review and challenge themselves and leaders to collect the least amount of data possible.

We can make a difference if all parties work together to go beyond expectations in ways that are manageable and meaningful. We want our teachers to be in possession of the key information that will help our children to succeed.