**SNSA Q&A: April 2017**

**What time of year should SNSAs be completed?**

SNSAs should be completed at a time of year which fits the child’s needs. There is a strong diagnostic element to the reports and this should be taken into account when deciding when to undertake the assessments. They can be completed at the start of the school year / midway through, to plan next steps in learning. Alternatively, they can be completed at the end of the school year to help inform professional judgements around achievement of a level and support planning for the following year.

**Does every child have to sit SNSAs?**

The expectation is that most children will sit the SNSAs. However, where the professional judgement of the class teacher, in discussion with the head teacher, suggests that sitting the SNSA would be inappropriate that child may be excused.

**Who do I inform if I have a pupil for whom I do not think SNSA is suitable?**

There is no need to inform anyone of this. The reports generated by the system will be based solely on the pupils who sat the assessment.

**Do pupils have to undertake the SNSAs all in one sitting?**

No. It is important that these are not seen as high stakes assessments so the impact of having all pupils sit the assessments at the same time should be carefully considered. The assessments should be part of normal learning activities for pupils.

**How do I cope with technological problems?**

A service desk is available to all SNSA users within the assessment system. It is staffed by Service Desk Operators from 0800 – 1800 Monday to Friday. Contact details are available within the assessment system. You can also email the desk at [info@snsa.org.uk](mailto:info@snsa.org.uk) If a school has significant difficulties with providing online assessments that can’t be overcome, SNSA will make sure that the assessments can be taken another way.

**What do I do with the SNSA results?**

It is important that the results are analysed at individual, classroom, establishment and authority level. Fundamental to the SNSAs is the fact that they need to be used to inform next steps. They may form one part of the evidence you use to evaluate a child’s progress against the Benchmarks.

**What if the SNSA results don’t match my professional judgement?**

Your professional judgement should be supported by a robust process of moderation with colleagues. If the SNSA report suggests that a pupil is making less progress than expected, staff professional judgement is key in deciding what to do with the information provided. They do not have to use the SNSA data as part of their body of evidence if other, strong evidence overrides it. If the SNSA suggests that the pupil is making better progress than expected, it may be worth reflecting on the nature of the tasks which pupils are given: are they offering pupils an appropriate level of pace and challenge? Robust professional judgement, supported by clear moderation processes should be at the heart of decision making about pupil progress.

**How does the SNSA sit with other diagnostic assessments such as GL?**

In P1, P4, P7 and S3 there is no expectation that a pupil should sit any diagnostic assessment other than the SNSA. In the intervening years, schools may make the decision as to whether to use ongoing diagnostic assessments to support tracking and monitoring.

**How should we report on the SNSAs?**

Parents can request summary data on their child but this should not be seen as the norm. SNSA results should not be printed off and handed to parents. At the same time, the results should not be hidden. Schools should have good quality, holistic reporting in place already and the information from the SNSAs should be built into this reporting. It is important that good quality feedback is in place to support the sharing of information with parents.

**How do I deal with parental concerns?**

It is important that ongoing dialogue takes place with parents so that they understand the context of the moderation cycle and the place that the SNSAs play within it. The SNSAs will not be used in isolation to make judgements about a pupil. Instead, they provide diagnostic information which can be used to effectively plan for individual pupils’ next steps. They should not be presented to either pupils or parents as high stakes assessments, but as just one part of the broader approach to assessment within schools.

**What do I do if a parent does not want their child to sit the SNSA?**

The assessments should be part of the learning and teaching of the classroom rather than being presented as a key event which needs special communication. Their nature and purpose should be shared with parents and pupils as part of ongoing home school communication. If the situation does arise, in the first instance a further discussion needs to be had at both class teacher and head teacher level around the nature and purpose of the SNSA, emphasising that it is not a high stakes assessment and that it is one part of the range of evidence used to evaluate a child’s progress.

**Will I still need to report nationally on literacy and numeracy or will the SNSAs take the place of this?**

It is vital that the SNSAs are not seen as assessments which determine a child’s level of attainment, or benchmark assessments. They are ONE piece of evidence which MAY be used to form part of the body of evidence you will look at holistically to form your judgement on the child’s level of attainment. They do not cover all of the Benchmarks and are only a snapshot of part of a child’s journey to attainment. Therefore you will still need to report on literacy and numeracy attainment in P1, P4, P7 and S3. This judgement will be reached after moderation of a range of evidence.

**Will the SNSAs be used to create league tables?**

No. The report that the Scottish government receive from the SNSAs will be a high level trend report. Neither the government nor Education Scotland can access lower level data. Local authorities will get reports with an overview of performance per school. The purpose of this is to aid professional dialogue, not to create league tables and these reports should not be publicly shared.

**Will the SNSAs be the same next year? Won’t we just end up teaching to the test?**

It is important to remember that the SNSA does not have priority as a piece of evidence over any other work that is completed by a pupil or teacher observation that takes place. The questions on the SNSAs will be replenished by 1/3 each year to try to avoid a narrowing of teaching approaches.

**I have concerns about the assessments my pupils have sat – what should I do?**

In the session 2017-2018 the main concerns have focused around early level tests: both the level of digital skills needed and the level of difficulty have been highlighted. It is important that the SNSA have an accurate picture of schools’ experiences so please share any concerns you might have with them.

**I haven’t yet asked pupils to sit the assessments – help!**

The assessments need to be completed by mid-May as this is when the information from them will be sent to local authorities. David Leng from the SNSA is very keen to see them in action, particularly with P1s, so contact him through the SNSA if you’d like to invite him into your school while they are taking place.