

# ANECDOTES

## 1. ROUND TWO

Round two of Primary 7 SNSA. WiFi working – check, netbooks on – check, pupils ready to log on and reminder of all usernames and passwords – check!

After a successful login pupils enter the SNSA home page. The page displays the ‘Active Assessment’ section. Pupils receive a personalised welcome, a notification indicates which assessments have not yet been completed.

Clicking on the green ‘Start Assessment’ tab on the Literacy assessment banner, echoed huffs are heard across the classroom as the assessment begins. Over the huffing I remind the Primary 7 pupils they are to take their time as there is no time limit to the assessment, however I think my reminder has fallen on deaf ears.

Pupils read through the questions and select their answer from the multiple choice selection. Question number always remains at the top of the page even when scrolling down longer questions. When pupils are satisfied with their selected answer they click on the green ‘Next’ on the bottom right of their screen. Once ‘next’ has been clicked, pupils are unable to return to the question.

I awaken from my daydream with a rather loud grant from Pupil A who now has a panic look on their face, upon questioning the reason behind the panic stricken face and unnecessary grunt Pupil A explains that they have clicked ‘next’ in error, however immediately after clicking ‘next’, Pupil A is prompted with a pop up question asking if they would like to proceed without answering the question, Pupil A sighs with relief, they take a moment to think but then shrugs it off as they unsure of the answer anyway and clicks the green ‘Proceed Anyway’ tab. Pupil A has doubts and wants to return to the question, however realises there is no return button and continues to proceed.

There is a small thin banner that runs below the question indicating how much of the assessment is still to be completed. Pupil A is keeping an eye on this banner as he knows the bell for lunch is going to be ringing soon, and he begins to click away trying to beat the bell.

## 2. LIGHTSPEED AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

I log into Lightspeed for the first time. The sweat gathers on my upper lip as I cast my eyes over the subdued shades of grey, my hackles springing to attention as I cast my eye over the numbers displayed on the welcoming dashboard. 133 schools. 991 groups. 7664 devices and counting. This is serious. I am not in the Kansas of my school anymore. A place where 700+ devices are my body politic, neatly formed into simple groupings. Staff or pupil. English Faculty or Health and Wellbeing. I know the lay of that land well, both in virtual and real life. But this is a different beast entirely. With some design familiarity I am able to navigate, identify and click the nameless ‘Switch Groups’ icon, a tiny standalone button with two squares one within the other, a hieroglyph to any user unfamiliar with the system. I feel a tiny wave of relief, prior experience is still going to be worth something here.

Fast-forward.

My Lightspeed credentials are autosaved. I hover my fingerprint over the tiny black square and am greeted with my preferred dashboard configuration. Bright blocks of colour underline the data for the day. 20k Websites visited. Curious, I give the cyan bar a click. My right eyebrow shoots up, an amused puff of air explodes from me. Who would have thought they’d see the day that assignments.onenote.com (Links to an external site.) beat out google.co.uk (Links to an external site.)? I turn to the grey sidebar and make my way into the labyrinth of menus, submenus, groupings to find my onscreen workplace.



## 3. TAKE A DEEP BREATH

Ok, this is it, we are heading towards the home stretch. All Primary 7 Pupils have completed their SNSA. The adaptive nature of the assessment has provided the pupils with challenging questions through a ‘banding’ system which is set according to the number of correct answers. The time has now come to view the results, it is something I have been dreading after observing the fast clicking action of the pupils in front of me. How do I know if they have even read the question, are they just clicking away to get finished? All I have to rely on is the generated diagnostic report that I am soon going to enter.

Taking a deep breath, I open the SNSA home page, clicking on ‘learners’ I select the learners from the current Primary 7 class, once all pupils have been selected I click on ‘Generate Report’... breath! A pop up screen appears with a choice, ‘Group Diagnostic Report’ or ‘Aggregate Report’, I hover over the two, not 100% sure which one is the one I am wanting to use. Clicking on ‘Aggregate Report’, another pop up appears, I select assessment – ‘Standardised Assessment 20-21’ and I select ‘Primary 7 Writing’.... Taking another breath, on the bottom right I click ‘Generate Report’ then ‘View Report’.

There it is the results are displayed in a bar graph indicating the percentage of learners that have been placed in a specific banding. Band 11 achieving above their expected level – only 10%, Band 7 just scraping into their expected level 24%, how could this be? I need more details on who the percentage refers to. I scroll further down the screen the pupils names are displayed with their banding result alongside, this paints a clearer picture. However, Johnny Click-A-Lot is one of the best writers and is meeting all the Experiences and Outcomes, how has he only been placed in Band 7?? Of course. he clicked the assessment away in a hurry to get finished!



## 5. COMEDY OF 303S

08:42. The mediator springs into action from its idle state. It completed its last round of ‘check-ins’ at 07.42 as instructed. It begins to chew through the system data. Serial number. Found. Profile diagnostic. Run. Match. Next. Serial number. Found. Profile diagnostic. Run. Irregularity identified. Re-sync. Push. Next. Next. Next.

08:43. The owner of serial number DMPD675FDQ1GG sits at their desk, planner open, ready to face another day of remote learning. The device they’ve been given to aid in this task sits, screen dark, in the depths of a rucksack. It’s been a busy weekend. Snow, excitable children, the ever present threat of a lurking virus. The owner realises they need app x to successfully complete their lesson starting in seventeen minutes. DMPD675FDQ1GG is retrieved and powered on but after a few minutes of swiping back and forth the owner realises there is no app portal through which to obtain the required software. Frustration creeping in, they send an email from a laptop to the appropriate person designated to assist them with such issues, the electronic missive topped and tailed with the required pleasantries. They wait. In the top right hand corner of the screen the wifi icon, noticeably absent, goes unnoticed.

08:44. An email notification punctuates the morning. The recipient logs in to the mediator’s interface. This device is locked or too busy to process the command - the activity has been rescheduled to run in 5 minutes. A few clicks and new override command is sent. They return to the email and politely reiterate the instructions. Is the device screen awake? Is the device connected to WIFI? A notification pings. ‘Yes, I have followed all the steps.’ The recipient casts an eye over the data. Last Check In: 12/02/2021 15:21. Around about the time someone might leave school on a Friday. They glance further down the page. Last IP: 90.248.202.160. A school IP address. They hit reply and try to delicately parse the user reported information with the system information.

## 4. HIDDEN FIGURES

A new S3 has been assigned to the second set by the office due to pupil numbers. The extent of the information provided about the pupil is minimal. On enquiry the pupil admits to having no idea what level or curriculum she has been following, replying ‘I don’t know’ to any other enquires regarding her experience with Maths. However the teacher has a secret weapon - STAR Maths. She acquires a department iPad and walks the pupil through the process.

Later the teacher checks the pupil’s report and explains that her score and areas for development are reflective of others in the class. The teacher details the National 5 curriculum which the class have not long started and commends the pupil on the assessment result. The pupil immediately appears worried and upset. ‘Are you okay?’ the teacher asks. The pupil bursts into tears and protests that she has always had problems with Maths, being the ‘worst’ in her class. Attempts to reassure the pupil that perhaps the issue is confidence are in vain. The teacher comforts the pupil by saying they will look into it more the next day.

Typically the only sign that assessments have not been completed correctly is the time to complete but this is fine. Perhaps the pupil guessed but without her admitting this the teacher could not be sure. The teacher ponders the possibility that the assessment itself is flawed. Truthfully she does not know how the system operates or how the algorithms determines what level a pupil is assigned, but usually pupil scores roughly match up with teacher judgement and the system has proven useful so far in setting pupils with no prior information on ability. Her class are going at a fast pace, more like a top set than a second. If her digital co-worker is wrong, keeping the pupil in the set even for a short period could prove harmful to her progress and confidence. If the report is correct and she is moved to a lower set as she argues for, then she could be disadvantaged by not visiting the National 5 course until a lot later. She decides that tomorrow she will reiterate the need to not guess to the pupil and repeat the assessment. Frustrated at the lack of transparency of her digital co-workers algorithms and processes the teacher moves on to another task.

## 6. PUT YOUR HANDS UP

Computer room booked, check. Log-ins printed, check. Assessments made live, check. Today is the day this class assess their progress in Numeracy with Renaissance’s STAR Maths. After the usual pre-assessment presentation, the teacher asks if there are any questions or issues. This is a hollow endeavour. She is all too aware that there will be issues beyond her control.

Once the fights over the best screens (without pixelated lines down the middle) and best keyboards (the ones with all their keys intact) have died down, the teacher reminds pupils how to access the website and leaves them to it.

Before long cries of ‘My log in isn’t working!’ echo around the room. She again reminds pupils that they are required to access the website through the specific link displayed on the board, not to just google ‘Renaissance’. She asks those still encountering problems to put their hands up. Slowly they rise one by one. Upon investigation she is frustrated to learn that each URL is different to the one on the board, her instructions have been ignored.

Eventually everyone is logged in - something which should have taken five minutes takes up half the lesson. She notes to herself to complain to Renaissance (again) about the ease of accessing the system, and logs into the portal to book another computer room day to finish these assessments.

