

Fiveways Case Study for The Key

Assessment without levels: approaches by special schools

UPDATED on 24 Sep 2015

How are special schools responding to the removal of levels? This article looks at how several special schools conduct assessment. It also refers to the principles of high quality assessment, as outlined in the Cambridge Approach developed by Cambridge Assessment.

Fiveways School, in Somerset, is the lead school for the Somerset Partnership Teaching School (SPTS) alliance. We visited the school and met Sam Ensor, the teaching school lead, and Louise Thomas, the school's deputy head teacher. We asked them how the school has responded to the removal of levels.

Levels were never appropriate for all pupils

Sam and Louise said that the school works with pupils who have a wide range of SEN, including severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties. This means the school is not strictly replacing an assessment framework based upon National Curriculum levels as, historically, levels were only appropriate for measuring the attainment of some of the school's pupils.

Using a suite of assessment tools

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They explained that the school has always used a suite of assessment tools that enable staff to capture the pupils' achievements. We outline some of the approaches used below.

Fiveways School helped to develop the Create Development Wheel, an assessment package available from the organisation Create. The wheels help guide the assessment of pupils' academic, sensory and personal development. Sam and Louise said the wheels help teachers capture pupils' progress, even if progress is made in small steps.



<http://www.cdwheel.co.uk/>

The school also uses B Squared, a commercially available package, to assess pupils' progress on the P scales.

BSquared 

<http://www.bsquared.co.uk/>

With some of its pupils, Fiveways School uses the Profound Education Curriculum, a resource developed by the Children's Trust School to support the learning of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

This resource provides a holistic framework, enabling schools to acknowledge individual pupils' needs and different aspects of their education, including therapy. Sam and Louise said it had been particularly helpful for pupils with communication and sensory needs.

The Children's Trust's website contains further information about the Profound Education Curriculum:



<http://www.thechildrenstrust.org.uk/page.asp?section=1343>



<http://www.fivewaysschool.co.uk>

<http://www.somersetpts.co.uk/>