

All Schools

9 October 2007

Dear Colleagues,

### **The use of P Scales for Children with Special Educational Needs**

From this September, the use of P (performance) scales to measure pupil attainment for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) who are working below National Curriculum level 1 has been a statutory part of National Curriculum assessment. This means that teachers will be required to make assessments of these pupils using the P level attainment targets and schools will report on the assessments.

The use of P scales is central to the Department's aspiration to recognise the attainment of those with SEN who are working below level 1. Better understanding and communication of the performance of these pupils will allow their progress to be tracked and monitored alongside other pupils working at level 1 and beyond.

#### Assessment

Currently all pupils are assessed by teachers for the purposes of National Curriculum assessment. The introduction of P scales into National Curriculum assessment means that teachers of pupils with SEN must assess those pupils who are working below level 1 using the P level attainment targets. Teachers are already assessing these pupils as part of the National Curriculum target setting process. Many teachers who work with pupils for whom the P scales are relevant – including many in special schools – are already using them (or a system based on them which is convertible into them) for this purpose and have been voluntarily reporting the assessments to the National Assessment Agency (NAA).

#### Who Should Be Assessed Using the P Scales?

P scales should only be used for pupils between 5 and 16 who are working below National Curriculum level 1 and have also been identified as having special educational needs. They are not appropriate for use with children who do not have a SEN even if they are working below National Curriculum level 1, for example some children with English as an additional language.



Many of the pupils for whom the P scales are applicable, such as the less than one half of a percent of children with Severe Learning Difficulties or Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties, are educated in special schools. Mainstream schools will not be educating many children for whom P scales are applicable and most of these children will be receiving additionally resourced provision.

### Data Entry

As teacher assessment of P scales now forms part of National Curriculum Assessment, the NAA will collect data on teacher assessments at the end of Key Stages 1 (collected by the Department for Children, Schools and Families), 2 and 3.

Many schools have already been providing data on a voluntary basis for several years. The arrangements for providing the data will be the same as these voluntary arrangements. The details are in the 2008 Assessment and Reporting Arrangements that are published by the NAA in September.

For more information on reporting arrangements contact [tests@naa.org.uk](mailto:tests@naa.org.uk).

### Further Guidance and Information

The DVD and booklet 'Using the P scales' is designed to help staff in mainstream and special schools to: use the P scales to make and share professional judgements about pupils' attainments below level 1 of the National Curriculum; carry out the internal and external moderation of judgements made in relation to the P scales; report judgements that are sound and consistent; and improve the teaching and learning of pupils with learning difficulties by using aggregated assessment data.

This DVD and booklet can be purchased from QCA via their orderline 08700 606015 (reference QCA/05/1589).

The QCA also publishes additional guidance on the use of P scales to measure pupil attainment. This includes the subject documents in the series: 'Planning, teaching and assessing the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties' available at [www.nc.uk.net/ld/index.html](http://www.nc.uk.net/ld/index.html).

The National Strategies are currently developing online guidance on the use of P Scales which will be available in spring 2008.

For more information on using P scales contact [pscales@qca.org.uk](mailto:pscales@qca.org.uk).

### Background

The Government repeated its commitment to extending the use of P scales to measure the attainment of pupils with SEN several times, including in *Excellence and Enjoyment: A strategy for primary schools* (published in 2003), the *Assessment and Reporting Arrangements* booklets for 2004 and *Removing Barriers to Achievement – The Government's Strategy for SEN* (2004). Most recently, in its response to the Education and Skills Select Committee Report on SEN (October 2006), the Government said that it would make collection of P scale data mandatory for all children with SEN working

below level 1 of the National Curriculum. The QCA ran a consultation on making the P scales a part of National Curriculum Assessment between November 2006 and February 2007 which attracted over 1,000 responses of which over 80% were in favour.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'H. Begol', written in a cursive style.

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