

The Education and Training Inspectorate

A Survey of Computer Based Assessment in Primary Schools across Northern Ireland

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Quantitative Terms

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

1. Introduction

The computer-based assessment (CBA) of literacy and numeracy has been a statutory requirement for primary schools in Northern Ireland since the introduction of the Education Assessment Arrangements Order (NI) (The Order) in 2007. The Order provides for the assessment of children in years 4 to 7 using a computer-based method of assessment specified by the Department of Education (DE). The Order requires that this statutory CBA is carried out during the autumn term and that the outcomes of the assessment are recorded and shared with the children's parents by the end of that term.

The purposes of the statutory CBA are to support schools in identifying the strengths and diagnosing the learning needs of individual children; to assist teachers in planning to meet the learning needs of all of the children in their class and to enable schools to track the progress made by individual children. In addition, the outcomes from the CBA can be used by schools to inform self-evaluation, development planning and target setting at whole-school level.

In September 2009, following a phased introduction period, DE specified the Interactive Computerised Assessment (INCAS) tool as the computer-based method to be used for the statutory diagnostic assessment of reading and mathematics for children in years 4 to 7. In September 2012, at the end of the procurement contract, the INCAS tool was replaced by two new CBA tools known as the Northern Ireland Literacy Assessment (NILA) and the Northern Ireland Numeracy Assessment (NINA).

It has been accepted by DE that the implementation of the statutory CBA has been a new, and at times challenging, experience for schools and that, since the introduction of The Order in 2007, there has been significant development in assessment practices in primary schools across Northern Ireland. Many schools are now making very effective analysis and use of their own assessment data for diagnostic and planning purposes at individual, class and whole-school level; they are identifying the children who are underachieving and are implementing appropriate intervention programmes to support these children to achieve the levels in literacy and numeracy of which they are capable. In seeking to ensure that statutory CBA remains relevant and effective and that it reflects more recent key DE policies such as *"Count, Read, Succeed"* and *"Every School a Good School"*, the Minister for Education commissioned a four part review of statutory CBA, policy and practice. As part of the review, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) was requested by DE to carry out a survey of the use of CBA by primary schools.

2. Terms of reference

The terms of reference for the survey were to:

- gain information on how primary schools have been using the outcomes of the statutory CBA for diagnostic and planning purposes leading to improvement in the standards achieved by the children;
- ascertain the views of primary school principals and their staff on the usefulness of the statutory CBA tools in supporting the individual child's and whole-school improvement; and
- provide advice to DE on future arrangements for diagnostic assessment in the primary school.

3. Methodology

The survey had three main components; an online questionnaire (Appendix 1) which was accessible by all primary schools; survey visits to a sample of 24 primary schools representative of size, sector and geographical spread (Appendix 4) and consultation with key stakeholders, including the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) and Classroom 2000 (C2K). School visits were conducted by inspection teams comprising a full-time inspector and an Associate Assessor*.

The online questionnaire was issued to all primary schools in February 2013. Of a total of 847 primary schools in 2012-13, 409 schools returned the questionnaire, a response rate of 48%. The analysis of the responses from the online questionnaire is recorded in Appendix 2 of the report. The school visits incorporated consultations with parents, senior leaders, teachers and children from years 6 and 7 and classroom observations. The findings from the school visits is recorded in Appendix 3 of the report.

Respondent profile

The following tables show the number of respondent schools by Education and Library Board and management type, compared with all primary schools. The figures show that the respondent profile is relatively in line with the composition of all primary schools.

Table 1: Respondent schools by Education and Library Board

Education and Library Board	Number of responses	Percentage of responses	Percentage of all primary schools
Belfast	37	9.0	10.4
Western	92	22.5	21.1
North-Eastern	105	25.7	24.6
South-Eastern	66	16.1	17.7
Southern	108	26.4	26.2
Missing	1	.2	
Total	409	100.0	100.0

Table 2: Respondent schools by Management Type

Management Type	Number of responses	Percentage of responses	Percentage of all primary schools
Controlled	190	46.5	44.5
Voluntary	5	1.2	1.4
Roman Catholic Maintained	184	45.0	45.7
Other Maintained	10	2.4	3.4
Controlled Integrated	8	2.0	2.2
Grant Maintained Integrated	11	2.7	2.7
Missing	1	.2	
Total	409	100.0	100.0

* A practising school principal trained in evaluation approaches by ETI.

4. Key findings

The key findings from the survey are set out in this section of the report under the three headings:

- achievements and standards;
- quality of provision; and
- leadership and management.

The evidence used to arrive at the key findings comes from the responses to the online questionnaire supported by visits to schools and face-to-face discussions. Where a specific question was asked in the questionnaire the percentage is included. Where no percentage is included, the line of inquiry was developed and discussed on the basis of comments included in the questionnaire.

4.1 Achievements and standards

1. A majority of the schools which participated in the survey did not find the CBA outcomes helpful in assisting them to:
 - diagnose the learning needs of individual children (66%);
 - identify children who are underachieving (67%);
 - plan appropriate intervention programmes for individual children (67%);
 - track the progress of individual children or classes (74%); or
 - set targets for individual children (59%) or classes (73%).
2. Most of the schools reported that they did not find the CBA outcomes helpful to them in setting targets for the end of a key stage (80%).
3. The schools reported that the time required to implement the CBA in the current academic year and the associated technical difficulties impacted adversely on learning and teaching time.
4. Schools expressed concerns in relation to the accuracy, consistency and overall value of CBA. They found the CBA outcomes to be unreliable and, at times, conflicting with the professional judgement of their teachers.
5. Due to the absence of quantitative standardised data, schools found it difficult to measure and track children's progress, to make comparisons within and across classes or to set targets for improvement in learning.
6. Schools reported that existing performance data in schools, obtained through standardised tests, was more useful, reliable and robust than that generated through the statutory CBA.
7. The schools report their confidence in using the outcomes from the standardised tests which they undertake independently to identify the children's levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy, to inform future planning at individual, class and whole-school level and to raise standards.

8. Schools reported that the CBA did not contribute in any meaningful way to school improvement or to an improvement in the standards achieved by the children.
9. A small number of schools, around 7% of the comments received, identified useful aspects of CBA particularly for creating an individual child's profile and informing individual educational plans. Many of these schools advocated using the outcomes from the CBA alongside existing information gained from standardised tests or for verification purposes only.

4.2 Quality of provision

1. Most of the schools did not find the CBA outcomes helpful in:
 - assisting them to review planning in literacy and numeracy at whole-school level (80%); or
 - guiding the teachers in their marking for improvement (80%).
2. A majority of the schools did not find the outcomes from CBA useful in:
 - assisting teachers to differentiate to meet the needs of every child (67%); or
 - helping teachers to involve children in personal target setting (69%).
3. The schools reported that too much time was spent on the administration and completion of the statutory CBA. This was exacerbated by the technical difficulties they experienced in administering the assessments and by the high levels of information technology (IT) skills required by the children to complete the assessments successfully. Many of the schools, particularly smaller schools, were also affected adversely by the lack of appropriate IT resources.

4.3 Leadership and Management

1. The evidence available to inspection teams demonstrated clearly the hard work, dedication and commitment shown by the schools in planning for and implementing the statutory CBA in literacy and numeracy.
2. Schools made an immense effort to support the children during the assessments and to analyse the outcomes through comparisons with their own internal performance data and the teachers' professional judgements. Equally, teachers were committed to fulfilling the statutory requirements of CBA and attempted to make it work in the best interests of the children.
3. Despite their best efforts, the evidence from the questionnaire and supported through face-to-face discussions indicates that most of the schools did not find the CBA outcomes useful for self-evaluation, development planning or target setting purposes (76%).
4. A majority of the schools also reported that the outcomes from CBA did not help the teachers to convey clearly to parents information about their child's progress and ongoing learning needs (72%).

5. The teachers found the reports generated by CBA confusing, vague and often contradictory. The parents reported difficulty in interpreting the reports and confusion with the different coding system used in the literacy and numeracy reports. In addition, the statements in the reports did not inform the parents if their child was performing at an age appropriate level.
6. The principals and senior leaders in the schools reported that they had little or no confidence in the CBA outcomes. As a result, the outcomes were not used to evaluate standards in literacy and numeracy or to inform self-evaluation leading to improvement.
7. Evidence indicated that the schools were, however, monitoring and evaluating standards in literacy and numeracy using standardised tests which they reported were more robust and reflective of the children's ability, progress and attainment. The principals and teachers stated that they have confidence in the information which these test outcomes provide.
8. The teachers use the outcomes from the standardised tests to inform the parents about their child's progress, strengths and the areas in which they need support. The evidence from the survey also indicates that, in a small number of schools, the teachers share the outcomes from the standardised tests with the children.
9. In the most effective practice, the teachers use all of the available information on the children, to make a professional evaluation of each child's progress and level of attainment. The ETI endorses this holistic approach to the use of assessment to effect improvement in the children's learning and to raise their levels of attainment.

4.4 Non-statutory assessment

Nearly all of the schools (96%) reported that, in addition to the statutory CBA, they use a range of standardised assessment tools for literacy and numeracy.

Currently, schools choose to complete the standardised tests electronically or to administer and mark them in-house. The evidence from the survey and from ongoing inspections of primary schools indicates that where schools administer and mark the standardised tests themselves there can be inconsistency in practice that results in unreliable outcomes and evaluations.

4.5 CCEA and C2K

Schools currently use a common format for reporting to parents at the end of the school year. There is no common format for reporting to parents in the autumn term; this has led to inconsistency in the quality and extent of the information which the parents receive within and across schools.

Although there has been significant development in assessment practices in primary schools, there are still inconsistencies across schools. In the most effective practice, all teaching staff within a school have a sound understanding of how to analyse and use the internal performance data to effect improvement in planning, learning and teaching and to raise the children's levels of attainment.

The schools report that the current information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure cannot accommodate the demands of effective electronic assessment. In

particular, they highlighted the legacy of out-dated hardware and the inability to import assessment outcomes directly into Assessment Manager.

5. Recommendations

In light of the evidence gained from the survey, the ETI makes the following recommendations.

5.1 The DE needs to:

- make the CBA available to schools in the 2013-14 academic year, for use on a voluntary rather than statutory basis; and
- commission CCEA to identify and engage a representative sample of schools in an ongoing pilot of CBA to evaluate its effectiveness and to ascertain the appropriateness of CBA in the future.

5.2 All schools need to:

- use their preferred standardised assessments in literacy and numeracy and use the outcomes to assist them with self-evaluation of and planning for improvement at all levels;
- complete the preferred assessments electronically at the same time each year;
- use the outcomes from the assessments to inform parents of their child's progress, strengths and the areas in which s/he needs to be supported;
- continue to report to parents before the end of the autumn term;
- share the outcomes from the standardised assessments with the children and engage with them in an age and stage appropriate manner in order to set individual targets for improvement;
- use the outcomes from standardised assessments, where appropriate, to identify the need for further diagnostic testing and the development of intervention programmes for individual children; and
- use the outcomes from the standardised assessments to support teachers' professional judgment and to contribute to the identification of children's levels of attainment in the Cross Curricular Skills.

In relation to reporting to parents, the current statutory requirement is that teachers meet with and report to parents, the outcomes from the assessment in the first half of the autumn term. The ETI recommends the continuation of this appropriate and important practice.

5.3 The CCEA supported by the Education Skills Authority or the Education and Library Boards needs to:

- provide schools with a common format for reporting to parents in the autumn term, to include standardised assessment outcomes, together with a clear explanation for parents on how they can support their children's learning; and

- provide all teachers with appropriate training in interpretation, analysis and use of the outcomes from standardised assessments in order to identify under-achievement/low achievement and to inform target setting for individuals.

5.4 C2K

C2K needs to ensure that:

- the planned ICT refresh for all primary schools is completed as soon as possible; and
- Assessment Manager is developed further to facilitate the import of the standardised assessment outcomes from the assessment providers.

6. Conclusion

In summary, the findings from the questionnaires and the school visits indicate that the majority of the schools who participated in the survey did not find CBA useful for diagnostic purposes or planning for improvement in the standards achieved by the children. In addition, over half of the schools (55%) indicated that CBA should not continue to be a statutory requirement for schools in the autumn term. The schools also reported that CBA should only be implemented when the system is efficient, user-friendly, accurate, standardised and compatible with other assessment tools. A recurring request throughout the survey was that one system be implemented uniformly on a long-term basis in order to provide comparable information, facilitate tracking of a child's progress and increase school and parent confidence in the assessment tool. Given the choice, the majority of schools (70%) would opt for the electronic version of standardised tests as their preferred tool for assessment.

The key findings from the survey of schools, will be used in conjunction with the findings from a review by CCEA on the operation of the CBA; an independent review of the technical issues which have arisen in implementing the new CBA tools; and a review by DE of the policy of statutory CBA to inform future developments in assessment and reporting.

Online Questionnaire

Achievements and Standards

How useful have the outcomes from the statutory computer-based assessment been in helping your school to:

- (i) diagnose the learning needs of individual children?
 Very useful Useful Not useful
- (ii) identify children who are under-achieving?
 Very useful Useful Not useful
- (iii) plan appropriate intervention programmes for individual children?
 Very useful Useful Not useful
- (iv) set targets: for individual children Very useful Useful Not useful
 for classes Very useful Useful Not useful
 for end of key stage? Very useful Useful Not useful
- (v) track progress of individual children/classes?
 Very useful Useful Not useful

Additional comment:

Provision

How useful have the outcomes from the statutory computer-based assessment been in:

- (vi) assisting the school to review planning at whole school level ie whole school programmes for literacy and numeracy?
 Very useful Useful Not useful
- (vii) assisting the teachers to differentiate to meet the needs of all of the children within their classes?
 Very useful Useful Not useful
- (viii) helping the teachers to involve the children in personal target setting?
 Very useful Useful Not useful
- (ix) guiding the teachers marking for improvement?
 Very useful Useful Not useful

- (x) In terms of the impact on learning and teaching time, was the time spent on the administration and completion of the statutory CBA?

Too much About right Too little

Additional comment:

Leadership and Management

How useful have the outcomes from the statutory computer-based assessment been in:

- (xi) informing self-evaluation, development planning and target setting?

Very useful Useful Not useful

- (xii) helping teachers to convey clearly to parents information about their child's progress and ongoing learning needs?

Very useful Useful Not useful

- (xiii) Was the training and support provided by CCEA fit for purpose in assisting your school to implement the statutory computer-based assessment?

Yes No Not applicable

- (xiv) Did you provide any additional school-based training for the teachers in relation to the statutory computer-based assessments?

Yes No

- (xv) Has the statutory computer-based assessment been effective in enhancing the professional development of teachers within your school?

Yes No

Questions (xvi) – (xviii) relate to non-statutory assessment

- (xvi) Do you use any other standardised assessment tool(s) for diagnostic and planning purposes in:

Literacy? Yes No

Numeracy? Yes No

- (xvii) If yes, please state the tools used for:

Literacy

Numeracy

- (xviii) Are these tools standardised to Northern Ireland? Yes No

(xix) Is it essential to have the statutory assessment tools standardised to Northern Ireland?

Yes No

(xx) Given a choice, which assessment tool(s) would you find most useful for diagnostic and planning purposes and for reporting to parents?

Please comment and provide the reasons for your choice.

(xxi) Are there any aspects of statutory computer-based assessment that you feel it would be important for ETI to follow-up in their visits to schools as part of this survey?

Additional comment:

Policy Questions

1. To what extent do you concur with the following statements which relate to the current statutory arrangements:

a. Computer-based assessment should continue to be a statutory requirement for pupils in the autumn term for years 4 to 7.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Comment (optional):

b. The requirement to report the results to parents in the autumn term is important.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Comment (optional):

c. The requirement to offer a meeting with parents to update them on their child's performance is important.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Comment (optional):

- d. Statutory computer-based assessment has supported / enhanced engagement with parents in their children's education.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Comment (optional):

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Comment (optional):

- e. Statutory computer-based assessment has supported / enhanced overall assessment in your school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Comment (optional):

- f. Statutory computer-based assessment has contributed to improved standards in literacy in your school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Comment (optional):

- g. Statutory computer-based assessment has contributed to improved standards in numeracy in your school.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Comment (optional):

- h. Statutory computer-based assessment is suitable for use by all children

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Comment (optional)

- h. What change to CBA, if any, would you suggest that would increase effectiveness?
NB: This can be to policy and/or the operation of the assessments themselves.

Other Comments (optional):

Results and analysis from the online questionnaire

Details of the results and analysis of the online questionnaire can be found in the Curriculum and Assessment section of the Department of Education website using the link below:

<http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/curriculum-and-learningt-new/curriculum-and-assessment-2/assessment.htm>

Minister for Education Statement on CBA

Details on the Minister for Education's statement to the assembly on CBA can be found using the link below:

http://www.deni.gov.uk/minister_for_education_s_statement_to_the_assembly_-_may_2013.pdf

Findings from School Visits

Ethos

- Staff in schools were using internal data and professional judgment to compare with CBA outcomes;
- schools operated a very effective e-learning policy; pupils and teachers very competent in computerised testing and able to deal with any problems internally;
- schools using ALTA Maths found this beneficial to pupils when completing CBA;
- teachers very concerned about the welfare of children who experienced problems with CBA assessments; in particular pupils with special educational needs (SEN) who took up to two and a half hours to complete one assessment;
- significantly increased stress levels for pupils and teachers;
- negative impact of media coverage relating to tests managed by the teachers and schools;
- damaging to pupils self esteem and confidence. Teachers managed well feedback to pupils with reassurance and emphasis on positives; supported with internal assessments;
- contradicts positive ethos of schools of praise, encouragement for individual progress;
- all schools approached CBA with a completely open and positive attitude and did not allow the numerous technical problems to impact on children;
- schools had high hopes for NINA/NILA; wanted to try to make it work but many were let down in the outworking;
- invested in time for substitute cover; analysis of feedback;
- lack of inclusion of the children (CBA done to them); adaptive nature of CBA not fully explained or understood; in some schools results not shared with the children to avoid negative impact;
- some schools provided practice sessions to ensure children familiar with the process; in order for them to be able to achieve the best possible outcomes; AND
- parents provided with explanations and guidance by the schools on how to interpret outcomes.

Overall an immense effort by the schools to support children's analysis of the outcomes with internal data and teacher judgements in an attempt to verify outcomes and inform how best to deal with feedback; statements identified that were relevant to children and also highlighting of those that conflicted with the internal assessment process and teacher judgements; explanations provided to parents; schools committed to fulfilling their statutory requirement.

Leadership and Management

- Schools were monitoring standards in literacy and numeracy using Progress in English/Progress in Maths (PIE/PIM) which they reported were much more robust and reflective of children's ability, progress and special needs;
- NINA/NILA were unreliable in terms of outcomes. No confidence in CBA by leadership and management in the schools;
- lack of confidence in results compared to other standardised tests permeated all levels of staffing and reporting to parents; this was compounded by the negative media coverage;
- no training given on reporting to parents; schools had to manage this process;
- concerns about timescales for administration and reporting;
- no account taken of individual schools computer provision;
- quantity of reports produced excessive; needs to be streamlined with a focus on quality of feedback;
- participation and training in CBA has not been effective in enhancing professional development;
- assessment overload in schools, CBA did not contribute in any way to existing assessment in schools; many believed they could do without it; schools bombarded with too many initiatives;
- as schools had not received standardised scores for NINA/NILA – it is ineffective in informing school leadership at a strategic level; scores when received will be out of date; and
- two different reporting systems using different codes and colours for reporting; there is a need for standardisation.

Quality of Provision

- The CBA results only valued as a secondary source to compare PIE/PIM;
- detrimental impact on children's learning; huge impact on teaching and learning time during the administration especially in small schools;
- tests are narrow in focus and not connected to teaching and learning across the curriculum;

- not educationally suitable for children with SEN or those with English as an additional language (EAL);
- testing of ICT skills rather than knowledge and understanding;
- schools reported that INCAS was starting to embed and connect to internal assessment but it was only one part of the bigger picture; no evidence of this with NINA/NILA;
- NINA and NILA needs to generate class and group as well as individual reports to be manageable and useful for teachers' reports; needs to happen in the first term;
- standardised tests do not need to be adaptive if they were reliable i.e. PIE/PIM;
- none of the schools use CBA to influence planning at whole-school/key stage level; and
- NINA/NILA not fit for purpose in present form; outcomes not robust; need for standardised scores in first term.

Children/Target setting

- Schools were more positive about INCAS;
- in some schools results of CBA not shared with the children; they were disappointed about this; one suggestion was to have a child-friendly printout;
- CBA did not inform the children to set individual targets; target setting was based on assessment for learning, success criteria, self evaluation, internal assessments and discussion with the teacher;
- children and teachers felt that they should complete tests later in the academic year as many concepts had not been taught yet; questions asked were therefore not appropriate and did not tie in with teachers' planning or material children had covered;
- in two schools the children could not complete the tests as they kept reverting to Irish; too easy to accidentally click on the Irish format;
- children in Irish medium schools found mathematical language very challenging;
- children frustrated at computer adaptive response - how quickly question notched up or down;
- children reported difficulties with technical hitches, computer freezing, stopping and having to log back in and restart the test; the voices used in NINA/NILA difficult to understand - too voices too high pitched with a need for Northern Ireland accents;

- system needs to be tested as it is not child focused;
- children were reporting, “I thought I was better at literacy than I was....”; and
- parent – “I did not share outcomes with my child because it would have made her sad”; PIM score was 125.

Inclusion/Diversity

- Children with additional needs found CBA more challenging particularly NINA/NILA;
- success depended somewhat on how computer literate children were i.e. availability of computers at home; some had more access than others;
- irrelevant and unsuitable for particular groups e.g. Roma children - no written language tradition;
- no exemptions; visual impaired, deaf or children with Aspergers Syndrome – possible human rights issue;
- reporting to parents in schools with 59% EAL children - very confusing and in worst cases impossible to understand/derive meaning;
- additional stress for children with ASD;
- not suitable for low ability children who in some cases accessed Irish version;
- no allowances for children with moderate learning difficulties (MLD) or children in learning support units, especially those with a very short concentration span; for some testing took up to two weeks;
- in some cases low ability children did not receive comments which indicated anything they could do; limited question bank for lower ability children; and
- teachers had to spend too much time re-phrasing NINA/NILA targets into a form of words parents and children could read and understand (particularly for schools in high social deprivation areas).

Achievements and Standards

- NINA/NILA statements contradicted professional opinion and were inaccurate when compared to other standardised test/outcomes and to children’s performance in class;
- schools using the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), PIE/PIM and have confidence in it; being used to inform and set targets and raise standards; some review of INCAS but it did not provide any additional valuable information; INCAS at best helped to confirm what schools already knew;

- CBA did not contribute in any meaningful way to support work in the schools directed at improving achievements and standards; did not contribute to school improvement;
- NINA/NILA not diagnostic as all children completed different questions and teachers could not analyse outcomes in a meaningful way in order to raise standards for all children;
- unable to identify under-achievement - no trust in developed ability scores; and
- schools felt CBA was a bolt on and disconnected; unlike INCAS - class and year group formats provided.

Parents/Reporting

- Reports unclear and complex – NINA/NILA; statements were vague and many contradicted each other;
- reports did not reflect schools' internal data; information sheets confusing and inadequate; parents reported difficulty in interpreting NINA/NILA e.g. green circles suggest above average but corresponding statement indicated the child may need help; lack of understanding of the purpose and essential elements of the colour coding of results in NINA/NILA;
- mixed coding system – not age or phase related;
- need for standardisation of format for NINA/NILA;
- parents of children with SEN reported inflated outcomes;
- parents would have liked an overall level and or age related score; need for both quantitative and qualitative data;
- children were disadvantaged if there was no computer at home/ internet access;
- in light of DE's drive to involve more parents in their children's learning – need for more information and consultation with parents re CBA;
- parents of children with SEN especially MLD found reports very negative – “very little to celebrate”; and
- statements did not help or inform parents if their child was performing at an age appropriate level.

External Training

- Some schools reported that the initial training provided was good, online/pilot schools training; service received from any contact with C2K or CCEA satisfactory;
- online training needed a support manual for reference;
- training was ill timed, rushed through and poor quality;

- limited amount of guidance given;
- training did not take account of any technical, administrative issues or problems that might arise;
- pilot schools reported back technical issues/glitches and key problems that might arise during implementation phase no evidence that feedback from schools was taken on board; many of the problems experienced could have been avoided;
- teachers expressed the need for face-to-face training including 'mop up' training; small schools in particular felt they were disadvantaged;
- need for better training/exposure to questions being asked; teachers were unsure why children got questions wrong; not enough examples during training; access to online training difficult and needed to be available at an earlier date;
- two different systems - administration, reporting, printing; unwieldy (6 reports per child);
- helpdesk inadequate;
- no training on reporting to parents;
- dissatisfied with clarity regarding the level/type of support teachers could give to children;
- cost of coloured printing a concern for schools; and
- Irish medium schools were consulted from beginning of NILA/NINA process, an improvement on INCAS process.

Responses of ETI Associate Assessors to questions posed

1. Adaptive nature of assessment, is this important?

No, not necessary or important for the tests to be adaptive; problem with inability to go back to correct if questions are wrong.

Adaptive quality; NINA/NILA is not good enough; needs to be discreetly and effectively adaptive.

There is a desire to move towards digital testing but it needs to be fit for purpose; children need to see progress, be able to go back to check answers and a time limit set for tests; progress bar needed.

Year 4 children no need for adaptive tests.

2. NFER, PIE/PIM not standardised within Northern Ireland setting is this an issue?

No not important or essential to have Northern Ireland standardised scores; scores are based on national averages so there is confidence in the data. Initial NFER did consider Northern Ireland region.

3. Was there any indication that schools had received an explanation of the purpose of CBA and how it would link to assessment in schools?

No; misunderstanding in schools; no clear communication to the schools.

Schools feel short changed with NINA/NILA – no standardised SS/data
Electronic PIE/PIM is the way forward for assessment in schools.

Schools visited in the survey

Scoil An Droichid, Belfast
St Vincent de Paul Primary School, Belfast
Forge Integrated Primary School, Belfast
Victoria College Preparatory School, Belfast
Botanic Primary School, Belfast
St Eoghan's Primary School, Draperstown, Magherafelt
Round Tower Integrated Primary School, Antrim
Ballyclare Primary School
St Colman's Primary School, Dromore
Mullavilly Primary School, Tandragee
Moneymore Primary School, Magherafelt
St Ronan's Primary School, Newry
Christ the King Primary School, Ballynahinch
St Nicholas' Primary School, Ardglass
Kircubbin Integrated Primary School
Rowandale Integrated Primary School, Moira
Scoil na Fuiseoige, Belfast
Moat Primary School, Lisnaskea, Enniskillen
Tempo Primary School, Enniskillen
Killyhommon Primary School, Enniskillen
Omagh County Primary School
Gaelscoil Eadain Mhoir, Londonderry
Nazareth House Primary School, Londonderry
Holy Family Primary School, Londonderry

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