

BSquared

The Results of B Squared's "The Rochford Review: Final Report" Customer Questionnaire



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Introduction

At the end of October 2016, The Rochford Review: Final Report (The Report) was published by the Department for Education (DfE). At B Squared, we spent time deciphering and analysing the recommendations made within the report because we knew that if they were enacted they would have a big impact on assessment practices for the majority of our customers. In light of this, we wanted to give our customers an opportunity to voice their opinions so we created a questionnaire and invited them to respond. To gather additional viewpoints, we also sent the invitation to the members of the SLD Forum. We wanted to understand what educational professionals felt about The Report and the implications of The Group's recommendations.

The questionnaire ran for 25 days and we had a total of 325 responses. A broad range education professionals responded to our questionnaire, the majority (87%) were people who work in special education settings, with 9% from people who work in mainstream settings and 2% from people who work in Alternative Provisions. When it came to the phase of education that they worked in, 58% of people work in settings with primary education provision, 58% work in settings with secondary education provision, 25% work in settings with early education provision, and 15% of respondents work in settings with further education provision. The types of jobs our respondents identified as included TAs, teachers, senior leaders and others. The largest proportion of responses (34%) were from teachers. A further 23% of respondents identified themselves as Subject or Department Leaders and 20% of respondents identified themselves as Head teachers.

The majority of respondents (55%) stated that, on the whole, they agreed with The Report's recommendations, while only 5% of respondents stated that they disagreed. The remaining 40% of respondents stated that they were undecided. Opinions were divided on the recommendations regarding the new performance descriptors, whether data be submitted for pupils not engaged in subject specific learning and assessing using the four broad areas of need. Opinions were closer in agreement when it came to the seven aspects of cognition and learning, Initial Teacher Training (ITT), Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and collaborative working and assessing pupils with EAL.

Recommendation 1

The removal of the statutory requirement to assess pupils using P scales.

Our findings show that 58% of respondents agreed with this recommendation.

We asked respondents to identify whether they found the P scale level descriptors useful for assessing the cognitive development of pupils working at an ability lower than the expectations of the National Curriculum Year 1 programme of study. These descriptors were found useful by 76% of respondents and this opinion was shared across the different job roles. Head teachers had the highest percentage of respondents (82%) stating they find these descriptors useful.

We asked respondents if this recommendation was enacted, would they continue to use the P scale to fulfil any aspect of assessment within their school. There was an even split here, 50% of respondents said they would and 50% said they wouldn't.

Recommendation 2

The interim pre-key stage standards for pupils working below the standard of the national curriculum tests are made permanent, and extended to include all pupils engaged in subject-specific learning.

Our findings show that 64% of respondents agreed with this recommendation.

We asked respondents how they felt that the interim pre-key stage standards differed from the old National Curriculum level descriptors. We had a wide range of responses. The examples below represent either common responses or insightful statements:

- They have raised the bar, which makes it more difficult for SEN pupils to be recognised as achieving well.
- Technically they are different but the reality is that they don't produce an output that actually has benefit for the pupil. The outcome is invariably the same for virtually our entire cohort. I agree with the principle of it being more universal.
- They are far too vague, not enough detail for the less able who may be at that level for quite a long time.
- There seems to be more flexibility and pupil centred feel to the interim assessments.
- For our pupils, they will nearly all remain as BLW (ie below expected standards) throughout their school lives. This does not reflect their progress, where old level descriptors captured at least some progress.
- The new 2017 frameworks provide the flexibility needed within a wide diversity specialist setting.
- I work with teenagers and feel this framework will not suffice the needs of older children.
- I feel these may not work for pupils working below level 1. Although the old level descriptors may be outdated and not fit for purpose I feel they are useful and achievable for students with SEND.
- They are skills based and summative, whereas the level descriptors can be used in a more formative capacity that highlights progress.
- They make the expectations clearer and the language used is less ambiguous.

Although the majority of respondents agreed with this recommendation, there were still a number of concerns which centred on how they will be used. Currently, P Levels are used as part of the on-going formative assessment within a school and as the end of key stage summative assessment that is submitted nationally. The new standards are designed to be used only for summative assessment at the end of the key stage. Schools will need to use a different system for their on-going formative assessment.

We also asked respondents if this recommendation was enacted, would they track progress towards these standards on an on-going basis or would they develop/purchase a separate curriculum tracking tool. This was

also split relatively evenly, with 49% said they would track toward the end of key stage standards whereas 51% said they would use a separate curriculum tracking system.

Recommendation 3

Schools should assess pupils' development in all 4 areas, but statutory assessment for pupils who are not engaged in subject-specific learning should be limited to the area of cognition and learning.

Our findings show that 63% of respondents agreed with this recommendation.

The majority of respondents agreed that schools should assess pupils' development in all four areas. A large proportion of respondents (61%) stated they currently assess these areas. Of these responses, 82% (50% overall) currently record and report on these four areas.

Almost all respondents (96%) stated that in the future they would like to have a record of pupils' development across these four areas.

Recommendation 4

A statutory duty to assess pupils not engaged in subject-specific learning against the 7 aspects of cognition and learning.

Our findings show that 88% of respondents agreed with this recommendation.

There was overwhelming support for this recommendation across all job roles. Teaching Assistants were the only group to have less than 80% agreement with this recommendation.

Only 49% of respondents were familiar with the Engagement Profile and Scale work undertaken by Professor Barry Carpenter OBE and the Complex Learning Difficulties and Disabilities Research team.

We asked respondents whether they felt that the seven areas of engagement demonstrated a hierarchy of skill, a breadth of skill, a combination of both or something else. The majority of respondents (76%) felt that these seven areas were a combination of both. They felt that the seven areas had different starting points but could be worked on simultaneously. Responsiveness starting first, other areas come in as the pupil develops. The remaining respondents were split pretty equally between the hierarchy, breadth and other.

We wanted to know when respondents felt that a child would start to be engaged in subject specific learning. We asked respondents to use the current P scale as an indicator of where they felt subject specific learning should start to be assessed. The table below shows the P levels which were identified by more than 5% of respondents.

P1(i)	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	Post-P8
8%	27%	16%	15%	10%	6%	10%

The majority of respondents (58%) felt that subject specific learning should start between P4 and P6.

Recommendation 5

Following recommendation 4, schools should be free to decide their own approach to making these assessments according to the curriculum they use and the needs of their pupils.

Our findings show that 70% of respondents agreed with this recommendation.

We asked respondents whether their setting should design and build its own assessment system, 41% of respondents felt that this was possible but the majority of respondents felt that this was unrealistic due to the time and resources required to make the system effective and useful.

We asked respondents to identify what they take into consideration when choosing an assessment system. The responses have been listed below in order of popularity:

- Pupil Attainment/Progress 91%
- Teacher workload 79%
- Staff confidence and competence 62%
- Accountability measures 62%
- A recognised system with extended functionality 62%
- Communication with parents 54%
- School budget 52%
- Multi-agency work (therapists etc.) 47%
- External moderation of work 46%
- Transitioning (between school/key stage 42%
- Bespoke system 32%

As would be expected, the priorities changed depending on the job role of the respondent. A high percentage of senior leaders were concerned with accountability measures, staff confidence and using a recognised system, whilst a high percentage of professionals working in alternative provisions put priority on transitioning pupils, communication with parents and multi-agency work.

Recommendation 6, 7 & 8

6: Initial teacher training (ITT) and continuing professional development (CPD) should reflect the need for staff working in educational settings to have a greater understanding of assessing pupils working below the standard of national curriculum tests, especially those pupils with SEND who are not engaged in subject-specific learning.

7: Where there is demonstrable good practice in schools, those schools should actively share their expertise and practice with other schools and that schools in need of support should actively seek out and create links with schools that can help to support them.

8: Schools work collaboratively to develop an understanding of good practice in assessing pupils working below the standard of national curriculum tests. This work can often be particularly beneficial when it happens across different types of educational setting. Schools should support this work by actively engaging in quality assurance through mechanisms such as school governance and peer review. This will provide appropriate scrutiny and help to support a growing body of evidence and shared understanding of good practice in assessment.

Recommendations 6, 7 and 8 are based on training, development and sharing of good practice. Our findings show that 98% of respondents agreed to all three recommendations.

They stated that there is a need for teachers to have a greater understanding of assessing pupils working below the standard of National Curriculum tests, that good practice should be shared and that schools should work collaboratively and engage in quality assurance to develop an understanding of good practice

We asked our customers how they felt Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) should change to meet the recommendations of the Group. The examples below represent either common responses or insightful statements:

- In depth training on child development & key developmental milestones.
- ITT should include a school placement in a special school setting.
- Looking at how to assess pupils with ASD who find communication difficult.
- ITT - more comprehensive training on the four areas of need. Not enough is understood about the code of practice. CPD - We would need the training in how to assess in a form of moderation (working with other schools).
- Training on how to implement a non-subject specific curriculum for children working P4 or below would really benefit staff and make them feel a lot more confident with this type of teaching and learning.
- SEND should be a compulsory part of training. Not just a lecture on SEND - but part of each placement.
- More practical, hands on approach to assessment during training.
- Specific training for teachers who wish to work in special education, Bespoke training for teachers working with children who are PMLD (P1-3) and SLD (P4-8).
- All teachers need to receive SEND training regardless of which school they will later work in.

We asked respondents how they will begin to share or seek out expertise and good practice, 69% of respondents said they would work collaboratively to develop an understanding of good practice across different educational settings, 53% stated that they would seek out and create links with those who can help and support them and 44% of respondents said they would actively share their experiences.

We also asked respondents if they think that B Squared should be part of the process of schools sharing experiences and good practice. The majority of respondents (87%) said that B Squared should be involved. We then asked respondents how B Squared could help with this. The examples below represent either common responses or insightful statements:

- Workshops, blog spaces, online forum and regional conferences.
- Local events. Case studies, online clips of good practice.
- Local events which users of B Squared can come together a moderate their work and levels with other users.
- Through local collaborative meetings and online forums so that national perspectives can be aligned.
- It's hard to moderate these days it would be good to agree greater consistency for SEN pupils assessment.
- It would be extremely useful for schools that are similar in phase / need, to be able to share assessment data for moderation and bench marking purposes, therefore B Squared to support in identifying schools which could be partnered, and also begin to use data to develop a system similar to the old Progression Guidance
- Local school network events and moderation hubs.
- I think there is great opportunities for B-squared to link local schools/networks together and enable moderation within this network. This is going to be a vital feature of our work in the future.
- The most effective and easiest way would be for B Squared to identify schools that appear to be the most effective at undertaking assessment; engaging with these schools to support (and check) that their assessment is indeed top-quality; and then helping such schools to share their best practice.
- Given the differences between special schools in a local area, it is necessary to look beyond county boundaries for partnerships to emerge. B Squared is in a unique position to provide a partner seeking platforms for those school which have the program in place and wish to work together to develop an assessment framework which works with a similar school population.

Recommendation 9

A statutory duty to assess pupils not engaged in subject specific-learning on the 7 areas of cognition and learning. There should be no requirement to submit this assessment information to the DfE, but schools should be required to report the number of pupils working below the pre-key stage standards. In addition schools must be able to provide evidence to support a dialogue with parents and carers, inspectors, school governors and those engaged in peer review to ensure robust and effective accountability for assessing pupils not engaged in subject specific-learning with SEND.

Our findings show that 63% of respondents agreed with this recommendation.

Currently pupil data for all students is submitted nationally at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Recommendation 9 would change that so only data for pupils working on subject specific learning would have to be submitted. The Government say that schools must be able to provide evidence to support the dialogue with parents and carer and external agencies, we asked respondents to identify how they would do this. The examples below represent either common responses or insightful statements:

- Using Evisense (B Squared's new evidence platform).
- Digital and video evidence supported by teacher statements.
- This has not been agreed yet. We, like other schools, will have to have some sort of quantitative scale, in addition to qualitative recording and video evidence.
- B Squared data. EHC plan review meetings annually and termly targets linked to this shared with parents as a support plan.
- We have individual targets which are measured. We also have written reports which describe the progress of an individual pupil
- Photos of children working, ILP folders (individual learning priorities) and annual review paper work.
- Video is the only way to provide evidence.
- Online collection of suitable evidence which could be accessed by all relevant parties when required.
- The write up from lessons and reports from parents and outside agencies are going to be invaluable pieces of evidence for DfE.
- Good pastoral care and strong links with community and good communication with parents.
- I would hope that B Squared continue to provide us with a framework that we can ensure is meaningful to our parents/carers.

Recommendation 10

Further work is done to consider the best way to support schools with assessing pupils with EAL.

Our findings show that 97% of respondents agreed with this recommendation.

100% of respondents who identified as working in a special education provision agreed that further work needed to be undertaken in order to consider the best way of assessing pupils with EAL.

We then asked respondents if they believed that pupils with EAL should be assessed separately from the rest of the school population. Only 47% of respondents felt that EAL should be assessed separately.

Summary

The findings of our questionnaire show that on the whole educational professionals are in support of the reforms that The Rochford Review have recommended.

Respondents are concerned about how education settings will assess pupil progress within a key stage. The Report focuses on end of key stage assessments and does not make any recommendations about the on-going formative assessment that they use more regularly.

As stated earlier, 50% of respondents said that they will continue to use the P scale in some form to track progress. We believe that this could be due to the fact that The Report does not suggest an alternative but rather suggests that schools develop their own or find an assessment system which suits their needs. This places a big onus on schools to correctly develop or invest in the right system which allows them to demonstrate their impact on pupils as this information will be used as part of the judgements made about the school. Schools will need to make these decisions with minimal input from The Government.

Respondents strongly agreed with the Rochford Review's recommendations to improve ITT and CPD, as they do not fully prepare teachers for the challenges of working with pupils with SEND. A lot of respondents called for more training on child development, assessment and working with pupils with different needs. Respondents strongly agreed with the Rochford Review's recommendations to improve ITT and CPD to help the development of teachers so that they can better support pupils with SEND. They also strongly agreed that schools should work together to find and share good practice and to work together to provide better standardisation between schools. This will not only provide more consistent approaches within the education system but will also support teachers moving between schools and thus reducing the knowledge gap.

Respondents recommended that B Squared should be part of this knowledge sharing process; suggesting that we may be in a better position to do this than local authorities as we work with a large number of schools across the country.

What's next?

Over the last few years we have been working on a range of projects that have increased the breadth of content from B Squared. We have produced a tool for profiling Autism that covers Communication, Social Interaction, Flexibility of Thought and Emotional Regulation. We have worked on a Developmental Continuum for pupils with profound and complex needs, covering Expressive and Receptive Communication, Social and Emotional Affection, Comprehension and Imagination, and Sensory and/or Physical operation. This currently covers the ability of pupils working between levels P1(i) to P3(ii) but we have already been asked to develop this further.

We are working on identifying the best approach to meet the needs of schools now and in the future. It is clear from the Report that all schools will be required/recommended to assess pupils with SEND across all four areas. We will be able to respond quickly to the changes that may follow when The Government confirms the direction of statutory assessment for SEND. We will be able to support our schools to implement these changes.

Our new Evisense software is part of the future of assessment for SEND and it is clear from both the Rochford Review's recommendations and responses from professionals that evidence is going to play a much bigger role in the future for pupils with SEND.

If you want to know more about how we will be meeting the challenge of the changes, then come and talk to us at the BETT Show in London (25th to 28th January) or the Education Show in Birmingham (16th to 18th March).

Once The Government has responded to the Rochford Review and our plans are finalised we will go on an SEND Assessment Roadshow. We will tour the country inviting schools to:

- Find out about how we are adapting our assessment frameworks.
- Learn how they can use Evisense with Connecting Steps.
- Refreshed training.
- Discover and discuss best practice for SEND assessment.

We will be inviting schools to host these events around the country, if you are interested in hosting the roadshow for your local area, please contact us at sendroadshow@bsquared.co.uk.