



My name is Simon Carnell and for the past 4 years I have had the pleasure of being Head of Centre at Pembroke ALC.

I have worked in Additional Educational Needs settings for over 15 years, teaching children aged 3-19 with Severe and Profound learning difficulties and spending many of those years in a Senior Management role.

Over my career I have had a particular interest in developing ways to assess children in a meaningful, accurate and informative way. The current system we have created at Pembroke allows us to monitor progress and inform future learning without being tokenistic, vague or simply ticking a government box.

Showing the smallest steps of progress for pupils with PMLD

Pembroke Additional Learning Centre (ALC) is a specialist provision for Monmouthshire LEA with school placements for children in the South of the county. It supports individuals aged 4-11 years with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD), Severe Learning Difficulties and Autistic Spectrum Disorders.

Person Centred Planning at Pembroke ALC

Pembroke ALC believes each child is unique and should be nurtured using the principles of 'Person Centred Planning' in order for their potential to be reached. The Centre uses Individual Education Plans to focus on barriers to learning and specific issues the child is facing in their development. Children are given a profile with targets focusing on their Key Skill areas. This helps them develop into independent, secure learners whilst raising self-esteem and developing peer relationships.

Progress tracking with B Squared

For the past 8 years, Pembroke ALC has tracked academic progress using B Squared assessments. The Centre started with the Company's paper based assessments, before moving to its online Connecting Steps assessment software. These assessments provide extremely accurate tracking of individual pupil's achievements and help guide target setting.

Why B Squared?

"Over the years, I have explored many different assessment tools, but I have found B Squared to be the most user friendly and meaningful, while offering a variety of ways to present and use the data. The system we use at Pembroke is complemented perfectly by B Squared's Connecting Steps and we continue to find additional ways it can be used to support us," says Carnell.

B Squared also provides secure data hosting, reducing pressures on the Centre's own networks and technical support staff. As the software is available online, support staff can easily record an achievement or indicate emerging understanding using any school device, without the need to go and find a 'free' computer.

"By having more frequent access to the descriptors, my team are more familiar with the levels and are making more accurate judgements on pupil progress," says Carnell.

Demonstrate the smallest steps of progress

“In our setting, the best aspect of B Squared’s Connecting Steps is the small steps of progress each level is broken down into. This allows us to track tiny increases in development that we would miss in other systems,” says Carnell.

When preparing Annual Reviews and reports for Inspectors, this is vital, especially when working with learners with PMLD, who may only make very small steps of progress.

This breakdown of the levels allows the Centre to seamlessly tie-in with Progression Guidance, a document produced by the Department for Education.

“At Pembroke, pupils leaving a Key Stage are set targets using Progression Guidance’s upper quartile targets. We are then able to accurately calculate the percentage increase of academic levels they should make each year to meet these challenging targets. Connecting Steps gives a percentage of level completion. So by cross-referencing our targets with our assessments, we can see if pupils are on track,” says Carnell.

Easily identify next steps in learning

The small steps are also useful for teachers in planning how they will move a child forward, as they can be used as lesson objectives or weekly targets for pupils.

When working with children on a daily basis, it’s easy to underestimate quite how much progress they have made over a 6-month period. Very often it’s a visiting therapist who will notice a significant change in a pupil’s development at their next visit.

“The same is true for the parents of our pupils. Using Connecting Steps we are able to show parents the small steps of progress their child is making. Sometimes parents feel that this isn’t enough but by linking to the Progression Guidance we are able to show that their child is in fact making exceptional progress,” says Carnell.

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As teachers, we are continually expected to have our data and assessments at our fingertips whilst showing how it is integrated into our lessons. We are asked for level summaries, targets, pupil progress, the list goes on.

With the many features of B Squared’s Connecting Steps assessment software, we are able to have most of these answers by simply logging in.”

Simon Carnell
Head of Centre, Pembroke
Additional Learning Centre

To find out how B Squared can help your school
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