



A pupil concentrates hard as she goes through the New Group Spelling Test

then read it in a sentence, and finally read it on its own again. Children on the SEN register did the same tests as their peers, but in a small group in a separate room. This enabled us to stop the test when it was evident that it was becoming too difficult for them. The electronic test, however, adapts the questions to the child's ability (see box). Being aural, the assessment is not suitable for children who have hearing impairments.

The tests themselves were easy to administer, the instructions clear and the time-frame manageable although, in our case, class teachers split the test over two days: single words followed by spelling in context.

I was emailed group and individual

electronic reports from which I was able to identify patterns in pupils' knowledge. For example, the report for Year 6 pupils showed that many rules and exception words had been mastered (invention, attached, lamb, plough, primrose, preview, thought) but some words had proved difficult for everyone (correspond, controversy, accommodate). Most pupils spelt better in context. What was most insightful was that some very able writers were clearly limiting their vocabulary to words they knew how to spell, which was impacting the quality of their written work.

The New Group Spelling Test is challenging but accessible, thanks to the inclusion of spellings from previous years. If budgets allow, this is a test I would

The online test

On a computer or tablet, pupils open the test and, wearing headphones, go through the two parts of the test, which is adaptive, so the spellings are in line with the ability pupils demonstrate. This is helpful for children with a low spelling attainment as they can be assessed with words at a lower level than that determined by age. It also means that they are more likely to remain motivated right through to the end. The adaptive element also benefits high attaining pupils because they can be tested with words that better reflect their skills.

Afterwards, teachers are able to generate both group and individual reports themselves at the press of a button. There is a Group Report for Teachers, which provides a summary of the age-standardised scores for the chosen group of pupils, presented both in rank order and in comparison to the national population. The Individual Report for Teachers shows all scores, a profile summary for each pupil and implications for teaching and learning.

invest in and run twice a year because it gives everyone such useful insight into their pupils' spelling ages.

The New Group Spelling Test from GL Assessment is £2/pupil/test + VAT.
www.gl-assessment.co.uk



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Gaining deeper insight into reading skills – Gaurav Dubay

The New Group Reading Test for students aged seven to 16, also from GL Assessment, tests their ability to read, decode and comprehend a text, revealing precisely where they need support, while benchmarking them against national averages. It also determines each child's reading age and, from Year 7 onwards, allocates a predicted GCSE grade based on current skills.

We have been using it with Year 7 since 2016/17 and this year tested years 8 and 9

as well. The tests are easy to administer. After logging onto a computer, pupils have 30 minutes to read a text extract and answer multiple choice questions on it.

The multiple choice format removes any ambiguity, giving the school a clear measure of students' basic comprehension and deeper analytical skills. For example, when answering questions that assess summary skills or the ability to analyse quotations, the child has to choose which interpretation best matches the extract. It is also possible to compare decoding skills

against passage comprehension to identify students who are competent decoders but have weak comprehension skills.

The test is in two parts – sentence completion, which mainly assesses decoding, and passage comprehension, where the questions become increasingly difficult. The report also identifies who is reading well and who needs extra support in terms of reading for meaning. Pupils with very weak decoding skills will be diverted to a phonics test.

Group and individual reports are



A group of pupils take the New Group Reading Test

produced automatically. At an individual level, the report highlights gaps and provides detailed insights for teaching and learning. Group reports can be at cohort level or focus on specific groups, such as students with SEN or in receipt of the pupil premium. These allow teachers to work in a very targeted way. For example, we discovered that one of the Year 7 weaknesses this year was selecting and retrieving quotations. While this only affected a small group of students, it still represented a significant proportion. Staff can arrange catch-up sessions for individuals or groups, and adjust teaching and learning for whole classes. After analysing the reports from the September

test, we assign students to sets according to their attainment.

The biggest difference the tests have made is in how we differentiate. We have comprehensive schemes of work and each of those reading skills is tested. This means that if we find that most students in a group are competent in a particular skill, we will only visit it now and again, and if there is an area of weakness, teachers differentiate accordingly. We also put interventions in place for students who are still struggling to decode while helping them improve their skimming and scanning skills.

We gave the results to parents, along with literature to help them interpret

these, but they found it hard to grasp the implications. For example, the test showed that one 11-year-old had a reading age of 17+ yet he was not one of our more able pupils: his technical ability to explain what he was reading was relative to his age. His parents focused on the headline reading age and could not see that their son's interpretative skills were weak. Consequently we are now putting a workshop in place to help parents understand the test results.

Interestingly, we found the New Group Reading Test more accurate than the SATS in assessing students' strengths and weaknesses. SATS just give us a number. The test gives us details on the areas we need to focus on. We are seeing faster progress thanks to the New Group Reading Test because we are now addressing these areas early.

The New Group Reading Test from GL Assessment is now available as a termly test. It starts from £5.65 + VAT per digital administration, which includes automatic scoring and reporting. www.gl-assessment.co.uk



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