

# Special Children

Meeting Children's Additional Educational Needs

## Helping you...

- Keep up to date
- Improve outcomes
- Support professional development
- Identify and assess pupils with SEN
- Discover new resources

*“Very useful. Keeps me informed of current issues and easy to read and use”*

Mrs Chris Graham, Inclusion Manager, St John's (CE) Academy, Clifton

## Inside every issue:

**In-depth reports** and case studies around proven best practice

**Pull-out** classroom resource

**Insights** into innovative strategies

**Reviews** by teachers, for teachers, of products that accelerate pupil progress

**SUBSCRIBE NOW!**  
Six issues a year  
FROM  
**£69**

### Spelling assessments – Donna Nelson

**Our school places a strong emphasis on spelling and grammar – this will open doors for pupils academically as well as in the workplace later on. To this end, every class from Year 2 upwards has a daily spelling lesson. A new spelling rule is introduced every Monday, with a focus on using the new words throughout the week, and there is a spelling test on Friday.**

Now that spelling is tested in the Year 6

SATs, it is essential for us to know if children are working at an age-appropriate level; checking this every six months would allow us to put interventions in place if pupils' spelling ages started to slip. Last year we took part in trialling the New Group Spelling Test from GL Assessment for years 2 to 6. Following the new National Curriculum, the test offers pupils plenty of challenge while building on spellings from previous years. This

means that every pupil starts the test believing it is achievable and is not put off by the difficulty of the first word, with the spellings becoming gradually harder.

The test we trialled was a paper version, with class teachers administering both parts, but the final version is digital and can be used on a PC or a tablet. The first part of the test comprised single words; the second was spelling in context, where the teacher read a word aloud,



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](http://www.gl-assessment.co.uk)



*Donna Nelson is vice principal, SENCO and Year 6 teacher at St Joseph's Catholic Academy, a one-form entry primary school for children in Goldenhill, Stoke-on-Trent*

## 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