

Notes of the discussion with Richard Porter, Test Administration Manager, STA on 15.07.19

Richard was pleased to receive the comment made by NW members that it is *“useful to have this 2 way communication with STA.”* This view was echoed by London members from LAs and schools during a recent regional meeting: *“It is gratifying to know that our views are listened to and taken into account.”*

1. Multiplication Tables Check (MTC)

N.B. Currently, the piloting of the MTC is in the hands of the test developers, however, once it becomes statutory in 2020, its administration and all associated aspects will become Richard’s responsibility.

Members commented on **concerns about children using keyboards** to respond to the questions and the problems that arose sometimes as a result, for example:

Teachers and head teachers reported that pupils verbalised the correct answer within a couple of seconds however, if they pressed the wrong keys they didn’t have time to delete and correct the answer..... when the answer was 56 and 45, the children pressed the keys quickly and in their haste did not press the middle of the next key and so typed 55 and 44. In addition “..teachers began to recognise it was as much a test of IT skills as it was of MTs. Also, if using a keyboard, children needed to be advised to use only the numbers on the top row of keys, not those on the RH side so they didn’t become confused or waste time trying to use both sets of number keys.”

In terms of **the check’s utility as a diagnostic tool**: *“We didn’t learn much about children’s tables’ knowledge that we didn’t already know, though there were a few surprises.”*

The scheduling of the check: *“Why does it have to be done in June when schools are so busy?”*

Richard’s responses:

The aim of this check is to focus on the maths involved not keyboard skills. This is why it is so important for the pupils to have at least one ‘dry run’ beforehand. Advice to this effect is in the guidance provided, but in the light of members’ feedback Richard felt that it would be sensible to strengthen the guidance in this respect.

Re scheduling: The curriculum states that pupils should know their tables by the end of Y4 and in the light of this requirement the check has to be used as close to the end of the academic year as possible. Clearly July would be even less appropriate for obvious reasons. Nevertheless, Richard said that he would pass on members’ feedback.

2. Test Administration generally

*“We still have **couriers** turning up for completed papers mid – morning on the first day (Monday) of test week.”*

*“Some **completed papers were returned** as they were deemed impossible to scan and we don’t understand why.”*

*Please can we have a **code** to identify children who arrive post – SATs, not A or L? Also for those in a dual – role situation and who does the data for them belong to?*

Richard’s responses:

This should not happen as Parcel Force has had clear instructions not to arrive before Monday afternoon. It may be that some drivers either do not receive this directive or simply

take no notice of it. If a school is concerned about this, they should contact Richard and give him details so that he can follow it up.

Papers can be returned for a number of reasons, for example ones that have been photocopied or those with additional sheets attached. Also, it can happen that when the papers are separated by being sliced through the LH margin prior to being fed into the scanner, any pen marks in this otherwise empty space will mean pages are rejected by the scanner.

There is no code for children who arrive at a school post –SATs as STA does not want a TA judgement for them from the receiving school. If the child was not on a school's register when the tests took place, STA does not require test information for them from that school.

Where a pupil is on the register of a school but also spending some or all of their week elsewhere, e.g. at a PRU or special school, they are not officially 'dual registered'. The maintained school on whose register they are identified is responsible for them and will be in receipt of funding for them (if any is available).

True 'dual registration' in law applies where children move around during the year, for example children whose parents are in the armed forces, traveller children. In such cases two or more schools keep the children on their registers. If they are at one of those schools during test week, then that is considered to be their 'main' school and it will report their results.

3. Reading Test KS2 2019

Some members expressed concerns over this year's KS2 Reading Test, noticing a considerable **increase in the word count** of the material to be read. One school had tracked the count year on year from 2016 [1797], with steady year on year increases to 2310 in 2019. In addition a member reported that their reading test results were considerably down this year and this was true of all the schools in her local area. She also reported that the children were having to **rush to finish** and the texts were **outside the children's experience**.

Richard's response:

He commented that this is meant to be a challenging test, however the comments were very valid and the increase in the word count was significant. He promised to feed them back to his test developer colleagues.