**Submission to Commons Education Select Committee on behalf of EPHA**

**Primary assessment inquiry**

**DRAFT**

**October 2016**

***Impact on Children***

* Too much pressure on certain year groups in Primary Schools i.e. Yr. 2 & 6
* Grammar Test not appropriate for KS 1 children who will have had very little time to adjust to this style of test
* Children in Year 6 were very stressed and worried by the fierce nature of the Reading test on day 1 of SATs week. Some children lost confidence because of this.
* The questions in the Reading paper at KS 2 were outside the normal day to day lives of Year 6 children in this country i.e. ancestor and comparing a column and plinth!
* Many children who would normally finish the reading paper did not and this led to a drop in confidence for the rest of the tests
* Children with SEND had very little support or leeway to cope with the use of language in the tests. Children with Dyslexia had very little chance of succeeding
* Children in Year 1 taking the Phonics test seemed to cope well with the one to one test environment, most staff made the tests as ‘fun’ as they possibly could without breaking the rules
* One or two Junior Schools were invited to take part in Yr. 3 Phonics tests as part of NFER programme; too much testing again!

***Impact on staff***

* To quote Russel Hobby (NAHT Secretary) “Teachers have no choice but to cut back provision to other subjects to cover the content in English & Maths”
* The secure fit model especially at Yr. 6 led to teachers having to gather a huge level of evidence to assess individual children. The impact on teachers in the time and energy taken to gather evidence meant hours looking to match children to evidence required
* Teachers in Year 2 & Year 6 found last year very challenging; the lack of information published led to rumours and many negative posts on the internet challenging the purpose and value of these tests. This could have been avoided if the DfE had been more transparent about the tests.
* The leaking of test materials on several occasions led to uncertainty about the validity of these tests. Security of information was a massive issue which again led to lack of credibility of these tests in the eyes of professionals
* The uncertain nature of the tests will lead to teachers not wanting to teach Year 2 or Year 6; therefore, adding to the Recruitment & Retention crisis by teachers resigning without warning. I was alerted to several cases last summer where teachers in this age group suddenly handed their notice without warning
* Teachers reported a mixed view on moderation; some moderators were well prepared and understood the guidelines, other less so which in turn led to confusion and in some cases confrontation over outcomes
* Some Headteachers, especially Infant colleagues felt they were not being trusted because of the ‘unnecessary’ level of security required by STA (cupboards being locked and unlocked every day)
* Real concerns from Headteachers in Essex that the broad and balanced curriculum that we should be offering children is being squeezed; especially in Years 1, 2 and 6

***Value and preparation for tests***

* There was not enough guidance from the start with exemplars-teachers felt in the dark about how the tests would look to children
* What is the value of comparisons about old curriculums and old style tests with new curriculums and new style tests; especially given that children are grouped into progress groups based on their KS 1 Scores, based on old average points scores?
* The timetable for submission dates was changed over the course of the academic year; there is a concern that this could happen again in 16/17
* Massive discrepancy between exemplar and the test

***Appropriate nature of tests***

* The DfE have acknowledged some problems with these tests but should have listened to professionals more in the construction and implementation of these tests
* It seems strange that STA are using a model that combines 2 best fit tests and 1 secure fit test to find a combined score for RWM?
* Some of the questions posed at KS 1 did not reflect the new curriculum as taught by Year 2 teachers
* The tests did not have questions that tested every bullet point from the curriculum
* The KS 1 tests were too hard and teachers had to make difficult choices mid-way through the year whether to attempt to teach the full content or concentrate on test technique as this was the first time Year 2 children would have been exposed to such a testing regime?
* The GPS at KS 2 seemed to be aimed at the next Key Stage. If this is the case what would be the purpose of using a test that reflects secondary learning? Tim Oates commented publically on this matter recently
* The ordering of the questions on the Reading Paper in KS 2 was bizarre and gave the children too much to read and too little time to complete the questions
* The Foundation Stage Development Matters is now accepted throughout Essex but the farce over which nominated provider would win the ‘DfE Lotto’ was ridiculous
* The phonics tests were similar to last year and again most schools coped well with the tests; the debate really is are these too early to have any statistical value?
* The Maths tests seemed to be better received than the English tests generally
* Some Primary schools in Essex have received requests from Senior Schools for Levels for KS 2 children? How educated are our secondary colleagues in understanding the changes that have taken place in the last 18 months?
* Mixed measures around greater depth writing and inconsistency of messages, greater depth was supposed to be level 6 equivalent and turned out to be level 5 equivalent
* Greater depth of maths and reading not clear enough

***Impact on parental understanding***

* Parents have been very confused about the new standards and new tests. Many Heads and teaching staff have spent precious time after school and in special events explaining the new standards and tests to parents.
* Parents were very confused about the leaking of some KS 1 tests which were subsequently not used. Their faith in the Government providing secure tests was undermined.
* Parents I have spoken too are also wondering how senior schools will interpret this data now that their children have moved onto Year 7?
* Parents in my school expressed concerns about stress levels of children going into and during the tests last summer. There were many reports of children crying after the tests and in particular the Reading test at KS 2

***Use of resulting data***

* Most professional associations have called for RSC’s to treat this test data with caution as it could be used against schools which could have far reaching effects
* Governors are asking questions of schools as to why the data was so far down at KS 2 from the previous year?
* Headteachers were not informed as to how the results would look until the checking exercise in early September. The concern from Heads is that the + and – scores could be interpreted in many different ways
* The concerns about re-sits at Secondary Schools could have a massive impact on child well-being in the future
* Moderation of the tests only took place in 25% of schools in each LA. Therefore 75% did not get moderated for KS 2 Writing. There seems to be a huge variation of results because of some teachers sticking to the guidance 100% and others interpreting the guidance in a more child friendly manner.
* Quality of marking in Reading and SPAG was poor leading to a lack of faith in the tests from teachers
* Concern by many teachers who were moderated about the definition of independently produced work

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