

Overview & Scrutiny

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission

Date of meeting: 14th June 2021
Title of report: Attainment in Hackney Schools 2021
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Brief

The Commission has asked to keep track of how well young people are performing within the constraints of what data is available. Given the exceptional circumstances of the assessment and grading process for 2020 and 2021 this update contains:

- Outline of assessment processes for 2021 (and differentiation from 2020)
- What has been learnt from the process last year - to improve for 2021 assessments and grading
- Impact of assessment outcomes on demand for post 16 and post 18 options (e.g. 6th form places)
- Nature of LA support provided to schools, children and families
- Equality issues arising from assessment processes - further work to address unconscious bias, equalities duties of school

Summary

Due to the disruption caused by the pandemic, there will again be no statutory examinations in 2021.

Across Hackney, teachers are determining the grades as late in the academic year as is practicable, to enable study to continue for as long as possible. Judgement on their performance will be based on a range of evidence, which could include mock exams, non-exam assessment (coursework) in some subjects, as well as other assessments done in class and homework. Guidance on this has been provided by Ofqual and examination boards. It is recognised that unconscious bias can impact on both expectations of pupils' attainment and on teacher assessment data. A programme of cultural diversity training has been rolled out across Hackney schools and guidance for eliminating bias in assessment distributed.

It is expected that assessment outcomes may rise for year 11 and year 13 young people, but it is too early to tell what the impact of the lockdowns this year will be as schools and colleges have not yet completed the assessment and moderation process

Hackney Education has continued to provide schools with additional support and advice, this includes supported moderation of writing outcomes at Key Stage 2, delivery of professional development, assessment and subject network meetings, audits and reviews. Specific interventions for groups that traditionally underperform co-ordinated by Hackney Education have continued remotely and in person where possible.

Secondary schools have been encouraged to use central Government funding for Summer schools to support new Year 7 pupils and advice and guidance related to transition have been given.

1. Outline of assessment processes for 2021 (and differentiation from 2020)

1.1. Early Years Assessment arrangements for summer 2021

There will be no statutory requirement for schools to undertake the EYFS Profile assessment in 2021. If schools do choose to assess children, they do not need to share data with Hackney Education, who will also not be required to moderate any assessments that are carried out. A new framework for Early Years will become statutory in September 2021, this lightens the expectations for assessment for schools and removes the expectation for Local Authorities to moderate Early Years outcomes in future years.

1.2. Primary Assessment arrangements for summer 2021

All assessment at Primary schools was again cancelled as a result of the school closures. Outcome data for reading, writing and mathematics will not be published again for this year. Schools are assessing pupils using locally agreed arrangements including, in many cases, the use of past test papers in order to report individual attainment to parents. Schools do not need to share this data with Local Authorities or the Department for Education. This data cannot be used by Local Authorities for accountability purposes.

The Multiplication Table Check was due to be introduced in 2019-2020 but was cancelled along with the cancellation of all other KS1 and KS2 assessments. For 2020-2021 it has been made optional. Schools can choose to administer the check to some or all of their year 4 pupils from Monday 7 June to Friday 25 June. The results will not be used for accountability purposes.

1.3. KS4 & KS5 Assessment arrangements for summer 2021

GCSE examinations and performance tables have been cancelled. Instead, there will be a system of teacher assessment supported by tasks set by examination boards. Teachers can use a broad range of evidence of a student's performance from throughout the course to inform their judgement.

Schools will submit 'Centre Assessed Grades' to examination boards. Teachers must assess their students' performance, only on what content has been delivered to determine the grade each student should receive.

2. What has been learnt from the process last year - to improve for 2021 assessments and grading

2.1. Primary

2.1.1. In light of the recent closure period and the removal of all statutory primary assessment for the 2020-21 academic year, the following advice was offered for the consideration of primary school leaders:

2.1.2. Short term assessments: Immediately following pupils return to school in March, consideration should be given to assessment which informs specific decisions on what

needs to be covered or repeated. Teachers will want to know exactly which knowledge and skills are secure and what needs to be revisited. This would imply an approach to assessment which is best represented by:

- targeted verbal questions
- low stakes retrieval quizzes
- in some cases, diagnostic assessments to inform teachers how to best support individual pupils

Whilst the forms of assessment mentioned above will be useful in the short term, they are also useful as continuous formative assessment strategies to ensure teaching is precise.

2.1.3. Medium term assessments: Standardised tests are assessments that provide teachers and leaders with a 'high-level' picture of how far students are behind where they would have been. These are not a substitute for the short term strategies that would highlight the incremental gains. Given several weeks after the return to school or early in the summer term after a sustained period of teaching, standardised tests can highlight the gains made. They can also help pinpoint individuals or groups that are behind, including those furthest behind. This could help leaders target resources, interventions and tuition at those who need it most.

2.1.4. End of summer term assessment: Whilst statutory assessment remains cancelled for the 2020-2021 academic year, schools are encouraged to consider summative assessments, in conjunction with the assessments listed above to show both the gains made, as well as highlight areas for future consideration. Schools are typically using summative tests at the end of the summer term, including past SATs papers, whilst these only apply to year groups who would have taken statutory assessments, standardised tests can be used again at the end of the term for other or all primary year groups.

2.2. Secondary

2.2.1. This year, for GCSE, A level and AS level, there will not be an algorithm, nor will there be a ranking of grades. Teachers must assess their students' performance, only on what content has been delivered to determine the grade each student should receive. They can use a broad range of evidence of a student's performance from throughout the course to inform their judgement.

2.2.2. To support schools, Ofqual produced guidance including optional assessment materials from exam boards based on past questions to help teachers make objective judgements. Grading exemplification materials were released in April, with commentary from experienced teachers involved in setting the standard each year. The optional materials included sets of questions and mark schemes; example student answers with examiner commentaries.

2.2.3. A lesson learned from last year was to ensure that settings leaders, directors of sixth form and senior managers with responsibility for assessment and quality assurance were fully informed and able to share practice as early as possible.

2.2.4. Across Hackney, teachers are determining the grades as late in the academic year as is practicable, to enable study to continue for as long as possible. Judgement on their

performance will be based on a range of evidence, which could include mock exams, non-exam assessment (coursework) in some subjects, as well as other assessments done in class and homework. Guidance on this has been provided by Ofqual and examination boards.

- 2.2.5. Students have been informed by their school or college what evidence is going to be used to determine their grades, and they will have the opportunity to raise any genuine and valid concerns. There is scope to ensure reasonable adjustments or requests for special consideration can be accommodated, but there is no scope for negotiation about the evidence used.
- 2.2.6. Students will be informed of their results on 10th August (KS5) and 12th August (KS4) 2021.

3. Impact of assessment outcomes on demand for post 16 and post 18 options (e.g. 6th form places)

- 3.1. It is expected that assessment outcomes may rise for year 11 and year 13 young people, but it is too early to tell what the impact of the lockdowns this year will be as schools and colleges have not yet completed the assessment and moderation process.
- 3.2. The applications for year 12 places have held up or increased in some schools.
- 3.3. With the increased number of Applied General courses offered by school sixth forms many have a higher number of places for young people with a lower average GCSE score.
- 3.4. There is evidence that demand for year 12 places is very competitive in many Hackney schools, with many receiving an increased level of external applications. The colleges are also seeing increased applications, notably at Bsix college.
- 3.5. Almost all young people who are unlikely to meet their school's entry requirements have received an offer of a place - we are encouraging them via Project Hackney to look within the borough where possible.
- 3.6. Young people in Sixth Forms and College who applied to university this year have mostly been accepted.
- 3.7. The move to applications for apprenticeships had not substantially increased.
- 3.8. There is a small minority of young people who have suffered from mental health issues and whose destination remains uncertain at this stage of the academic year.

4. Nature of LA support provided to schools, children and families

- 4.1. School improvement partner visits to school have continued, in most cases remotely. There has continued to be a focus on the delivery of the curriculum, both remotely and when pupils returned to school. In the Summer term 2021, these visits will all take place on school sites. During the year conversations related to curriculum have also focused on the achievement of pupils, with a particular focus on vulnerable pupils and those who underachieve.
- 4.2. Schools who cause concern have continued to receive additional support and advice, this includes direct instruction, delivery of professional development, audits and reviews.

- 4.3. Specific interventions for groups that traditionally underperform co-ordinated by Hackney Education have continued remotely and in person where possible.
- 4.4. Secondary schools have been encouraged to use central Government funding for Summer schools to support new Year 7 pupils and advice and guidance related to transition have been given.
- 4.5. Well attended assessment network meetings have taken place half termly. These have shared best practice in the evaluation of pupil understanding to inform curriculum design.
- 4.6. The majority of Hackney Primary schools engaged in online writing cluster moderation sessions to support the accuracy and consistency of assessment of Year 6 writing outcomes. Secondary subject network meetings have been used to support and guide secondary schools with KS4 and KS5 assessments.
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5. Equality issues arising from assessment processes - further work to address unconscious bias, equalities duties of schools

- 5.1. It is recognised that unconscious bias can impact on both expectations of pupils' attainment and on teacher assessment data. A programme of cultural diversity training has been rolled out across Hackney schools and guidance for eliminating bias in assessment distributed.
- 5.2. Schools which demonstrate the widest performance gaps have been prioritised for this offer and we have noticed an increased uptake from schools including those who are not prioritised. Largely the training is for whole school cohorts to ensure messages of how to tackle bias are shared with all staff.
- 5.3. This training looks closely at how bias can play a role in key systems and processes within a school including assessment. Staff recognise the value of having training that is tailored to their school/ settings and considers the individual and organisational impact.
- 5.4. A number of sessions have also been delivered to Governing bodies to ensure a shared knowledge and understanding of inclusion, diversity and being culturally competent.
- 5.5. The cultural competency training currently on offer covers Unconscious bias, The importance of Racial Identity in Schools, PTSS and generational impact and how to be a culturally competent school. This range of training supports schools in having an informed and culturally competent approach which will impact on assessments of children and young people. There is also extensive training about how to diversify the curriculum- a key aspect of the Hackney Education Equalities Plan.
- 5.6. Hackney Education has also been approached to deliver parent sessions to discuss diversity, school values and next steps to ensure schools meet equality outcomes. A System Leader has facilitated a parental engagement workshop online with an Academy in Hackney, a mainstream secondary school and is set to deliver sessions in another Academy and a Primary school.

- 5.7. At each point where advice has been given by Hackney Education, staff have given emphasis on tackling bias and ensuring that key groups are not further disadvantaged, re-issuing the guidance that was prepared last year. We are confident that there is greater security in the process.
- 5.8. The primary assessment leads network provided training to assessment leads and school senior leaders on bias in teacher assessment. This was particularly relevant because of the removal of statutory assessment for 2021 which would undoubtedly pave the way for teacher assessment to play a more central role. The session discussed which pupils are more likely to be negatively impacted by unconscious bias in teacher assessment and suggested a range of strategies schools could put in place to raise awareness and mitigate against bias in teacher assessment at the primary level.