

1st

From: [redacted]

Sent: 29 March 2018 15:17

To: Leng D (David)

Cc: [redacted]

Subject: Re: Parental request to withdraw from SNSA

Thanks for this David and we will ensure our response reflects the points you have mentioned.

We would be keen to have GCC staff involved in focus groups and I am happy to arrange with you.

[redacted]

Sent from my iPhone

On 29 Mar 2018, at 15:05, "David.Leng@scotland.gsi.gov.uk" <David.Leng@scotland.gsi.gov.uk> wrote:

Hi [redacted]

Thanks for making contact with me. With respect to parental rights to withdraw, your parents is right that there is no legal requirement to sit the SNSA. On that basis the children can be withdrawn.

However every effort has been made to emphasise that these assessments are not high stakes, that are used to support children's learning and they should be administered in a non stressful manner. There should be no reason for children to get stressed.

I am obviously concerned that this is not the experience here. Opt out is extremely rare if there is good understanding of the purpose of the assessment.

I hope that helps your guidance

On a related point I am conducting some activity on user feedback.

I would be very keen to meet focus groups of teachers from different stages or contexts to get first hand experience of the SNSA in practice. This part of our continuous improvement process.

I am particularly interested in the P1 experience including where appropriate observing assessments being administered.

I am very keen to hear the voice of Glasgow schools and wonder if you would be happy to support this activity.

If agreed we could discuss the practicalities.

Regards

David

David Leng
National Standardised Assessments Product Owner
Scottish Government\Learning Directorate
2-B South\Victoria Quay\EDINBURGH EH6 6QQ

Tel: [redacted]
Mob: [redacted]
Email: David.leng@gov.scot

From: [redacted]
Sent: Thursday, 29 March 2018 13:12
To: Leng D (David)
Subject: Parental request to withdraw from SNSA

Hi David,

I hope you don't mind me contacting you.

I am just looking for some guidance around parental rights to withdraw pupils from SNSA. We have had one such request (detailed below). I don't expect it to become a major issue but am keen to ensure that we act in accordance with national guidance.

"We would like to request that our children, XXXXXXXX and XXXXXXXXXXXX not participate in the standardised testing. It is our understanding that there is no legal requirement for them to do so and that as parents we can opt out of them being part of it. For the record, XXXXXXXX's experience of having to take the test was stressful and he told us he was nervous to take it. That this testing should produce that reaction in a bright student is alarming. His teachers dealt brilliantly with him - it was the test itself that caused him stress. We'd appreciate if we could have confirmation that our children will be exempted from any further standardised testing during their time at XXXXXXXX."

Many thanks,
[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]

2nd

From: [redacted]
Sent: 01 June 2018 16:41
To: [redacted]
Subject: FW: Parental Opt Out Query -

Colleagues

Received the following query from [redacted] at the service desk. Think we need a discussion before I reply to him.

[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]

Email: [redacted]
[redacted]

From: [redacted]
Sent: 1 Jun 2018 12:49 pm
To: [redacted]
Subject: Parental Opt Out Query -

Good Afternoon [redacted], [redacted],

We received an email (Attached) from a parent seeking clarification on their right to withdraw their child from the SNSA assessments. In instances like this, we direct the parent to speak with their Child's School or a member of Educational Directorate within their Local Authority in the first instance.

In this instance, the parent has already spoken with their child's School and Local Authority, but is not satisfied with the response she received. As you can see from the email, it appears both the child's school and local authority have stated that participation in the SNSA assessments are mandatory.

The parent has then done some research and found that not all local authorities have taken this stance and she is looking for a written response from the Government on her write to withdraw from the SNSA Assessments.

How would you like me to proceed with this particular parent?

[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]

From: [redacted]
Sent: 01 June 2018 12:14
To: Info <info@snsa.org.uk>
Subject: Re: Parental Right to Withdraw Child

Hi [redacted],

Thank you for replying. In my original email to your department I did say:
My local authority [redacted] are leading me to believe that it is compulsory that my [redacted] must sit the assessment. Yet from my own research I understand that parents in other local authorities are able to withdraw their children.

So I have approached my son's school and my local authority, neither of whom are able to clarify the position. Internet research led me to a page of Scottish Government information and this email address was listed for further information. If you are unable to help them perhaps you might be kind enough to point me in the direction of another government department who can give a decisive answer.

Many thanks
[redacted]
Sent from my iPhone

On 1 Jun 2018, at 08:37, Info <info@snsa.org.uk> wrote:

Hi [redacted],

Thank you for your query.

Unfortunately, the best place to receive the clarification you are looking for is from your child's school. I appreciate that your child's school has stated that it is unclear on their policy on withdrawal from assessments, which is leaving you a little in the unknown. I would advise you to raise this concern again, with your child's school, and if the school is unclear on their policy on withdrawal from assessments then they should seek clarification directly from the Educational Directorate within [redacted] Local Authority.

Kind Regards,

[redacted]

-----Original Message-----

From: [redacted]
Sent: 01 June 2018 08:18
To: Info <info@snsa.org.uk>
Subject: Re: Parental Right to Withdraw Child

Hi [redacted]

Yes, I have raised it with the school directly and they too are unsure whether I have the right to withdraw my child from the assessment. I would like direct clarification, in writing to confirm whether parents have the right to withdraw their children, or not, please.

Regards

[redacted]

Sent from my iPhone

> On 1 Jun 2018, at 08:10, Info <info@snsa.org.uk> wrote:

>

> Hi [redacted],

>

> Thank you for contacting the SNSA Service Desk.

>

> If you have any concerns regarding your son's assessments, you should raise this with school direct.

>

> Kind Regards,

>

> [redacted]

> [redacted]

> Scottish National Standardised Assessments

>

> -----Original Message-----

> From: [redacted] [redacted]

> Sent: 31 May 2018 22:00

> To: Info <info@snsa.org.uk>

> Subject: Parental Right to Withdraw Child

>

>> Dear Sir/ Madam,

>> I am writing to ask for clarification on whether I have the right as a parent to withdraw my [redacted] from the new P1 Scottish National Standardised Assessment. My local authority [redacted] are leading me to believe that it is compulsory that my [redacted] must sit the assessment. Yet from my own research I understand that parents in other local authorities are able to withdraw their children.

>>

>> Many thanks for your assistance with this matter.

>>

[redacted]

3rd

-----Original Message-----

From: [redacted]

Sent: 26 May 2018 21:44

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject: Concerns about P1 tests

Dear Mr Swinney,

As the organiser of the [redacted], [redacted], I am highly supportive of the Scottish Government and the wider campaign for independence, whilst at the same time extremely disappointed with the direction the government is taking in terms of early years education.

Evidence shows that testing younger children is unnecessary, provides poor data and can be potentially harmful. With the best will in the world and even in the most relaxed environments children know they're being tested. When my [redacted] is happily writing away [redacted] will be trying things out, be bold and creative with [redacted] letter choices; if I peep over [redacted] shoulder [redacted] can sense that I'm watching, [redacted] is more tense, more uncertain and wants to double check all [redacted] answers. [redacted] is much more likely to make mistakes.

[redacted] is fairly advanced in terms of literacy and numeracy because she enjoys patterns and has a good memory. [redacted] was counting up to 100 before [redacted] and can attempt to write most words phonetically at 4 and a half. This ability has all been developed through play and curiosity, none of it has been pushed. I'm telling you this because I'm not worried about [redacted] performance on the test, I'm worried about [redacted] reaction to it and that it is a waste of time in gathering the data you're looking for. Children at this age can perform wildly differently depending on their mood that day. How much sleep they got, whether they'd rather be doing something else. Train your teachers and trust them. This information can be more accurately gathered through observation of playful activities that children have an opportunity to access at their own pace and when they're ready.

Look to education systems that work well, like Canada and Scandinavia. Look at how they monitor the development of their little learners, use that to inform your decision. Don't look to England for inspiration. The education system there is taking the wrong path. We're crying out for you to be brave and show the country that we can be different. You don't have to make decisions to placate newspapers and opposition MSPs who demand evidence and stats to prove that children are learning. Show them the evidence of experts, show them examples from other countries, make the argument all our children need you to make for them.

Trust that human beings are biologically wired to learn at this age, if they are given the freedom and opportunity to do so. Some teachers might want guidance on how to assess in order to prove children are learning. Bring in experts from pre-school settings both here and

abroad to give our teachers the skills and confidence to observe well chose playful activities and report on the children's progress. Not for stats and league tables, but to inform their own teaching. Take away the targets and tests and give them space to teach. Support them.

I don't want [redacted] to go through this unnecessary test so I will be boycotting. Because the independent Scotland I want live in is one that puts all of our children first and follows a new path where creativity, happiness and kindness are given the same value as literacy and numeracy.

There is so much more I want to say about how desperately our children need play rather than phonics and that the skills learnt through play give children so much more such as confidence and resilience (something that the adolescent mental health statistics show is severely lacking).

Please be brave, please be progressive.

Yours faithfully,

[redacted]

[redacted]

Sent from my iPhone

4th

From: [redacted]

Sent: 08 May 2018 10:58

To: National Improvement Framework <nationalimprovementframework@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: Adjustments for children with disabilities

Hi Many thanks for your email. I have raised it with the school and more attention will be paid to my child understanding that she can ask for a break if she feels unwell.

However what the school can do nothing about is the inability to go backwards in the assessment if the 'next' key is tapped in error. This was the point that I was highlighting that caused such distress. I am advised by the school that this is an inbuilt feature that they cannot over ride?

Can you advise if that is the case and what assessment has been done regarding a child doing this in error due to their medical condition?

Many thanks for your help.

From: [redacted] **On Behalf Of** National Improvement Framework

Sent: 03 May 2018 14:39

To: [redacted] <nationalimprovementframework@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: Adjustments for children with disabilities

Dear [redacted]

Thank you for your enquiry.

The Scottish National Standardised Assessments (SNSA) are designed to ensure children and young people with additional support or medical needs can access the assessments.

Comprehensive guidance and training are provided to teachers and schools. The SNSA is designed to allow children to take a break from the assessment and to resume where they left off at a later stage, if required.

The SNSA are adaptive assessments. This means that children will follow a pathway through the assessment depending on how well they answer questions. Questions presented to the child can become more or less challenging, depending on their answers. The assessments are designed to provide feedback to teachers, alongside other assessment evidence, to inform next steps in learning and are not 'high stakes' assessments like examinations – there is no pass or fail.

I would advise talking over your concerns with your child's school..

I hope the above provides you with helpful information.

[redacted]

National Improvement Framework Unit
Learning Directorate
Area 2B South, Victoria Quay, Leith, EH6 6QQ

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Fri 27-Apr-18 9:27 AM

Adjustments for children with disabilities

Hi, my child [redacted] has just sat her SNSA. I am concerned that in setting these there appears to be no consideration of childrens needs for adjustments depending on their disabilities?

[redacted]

I will be raising this with [redacted] school about ensuring [redacted] has recognition of [redacted] care needs built into any assessment process. However I am interested to understand why the assessment does not allow a pupil to go back if they have skipped in error? Also what consideration is provided about individual needs of the child?

Many thanks

[redacted]

5th

From: [redacted] On Behalf Of National Improvement Framework

Sent: 03 May 2018 10:41

To: [redacted]; National Improvement Framework

<nationalimprovementframework@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: Questions regarding SNSA

Dear [redacted]

Thank you for your enquiry.

The information gathered in the Scottish National Standardised Assessments (SNSA) is available to your [redacted] teacher and others (such as Headteacher) in school who have relevant permissions which are established by the school.

Assessment is part of everyday learning and teaching. The SNSA provide your [redacted] teacher with additional, objective information about your child's progress through Curriculum for Excellence and form a part of much wider assessment information gathered by the teacher during the course of the school session. The teacher uses professional judgement to consider all the assessment evidence available to inform the next steps in your child's learning.

The information contained in the SNSA is retained and available to your [redacted] school during the full time [redacted] is enrolled in that school. If your [redacted] moves school or local authority in Scotland, the information is made available to your [redacted] new school. When your child moves on to secondary school, SNSA information will be available to relevant teachers in secondary as it forms part of a child's overall assessment information during their time in school. Once your [redacted] leaves the Scottish education system, [redacted] data will be deleted.

The Scottish Government's expectation is that all children in P1, P4, P7 and S3 will undertake the standardised assessments. Should you still have any questions about the SNSA, I would advise that you discuss this with your [redacted] school.

I hope the above provides you with helpful information.

[redacted]

National Improvement Framework Unit

Learning Directorate

Area 2B South, Victoria Quay, Leith, EH6 6QQ

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted]

Sent: 25 April 2018 18:58

To: National Improvement Framework

Subject: Questions regarding SNSA

Hello,

I have a [redacted] in Primary 1 and was wondering if you could answer a few of my questions regarding the new Scottish National Standardised Assessment.

- 1 - Is the information gathered by the test only available to my sons teacher?
- 2 - How much will this information be used to shape my sons future teaching compared to the other information gathered over the year?
- 3 - How long will this data be kept for?
- 4 - Is it possible to opt out?
- 5 - How do you opt out if you want to?

Many thanks!

[redacted]

6th

From: [redacted] On Behalf Of National Improvement Framework

Sent: 03 May 2018 10:42

To: [redacted]; National Improvement Framework

<nationalimprovementframework@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: SNSA parental question

Dear [redacted]

Thank you for your enquiry.

The Scottish National Standardised Assessments (SNSA) are designed to provide teachers with additional, objective assessment information about the progress of individuals through Curriculum for Excellence. Teachers need to take account of much wider assessment information during the course of the school session to fully inform parents about their child's education progress.

No one piece of assessment information is sufficient to inform professional judgement and the information from a standardised assessment is of no greater importance than other assessment evidence. The SNSA are designed to provide teachers with additional assessment evidence when considering a child's progress to enable teachers to have wide range of different types of assessment evidence when reporting to parents. An over focus on one piece of evidence from a single source, especially seen in isolation from other assessment information, can be misleading and the SNSA are designed to provide assessment evidence unavailable by other means. It is for the reasons above that the SNSA are not specifically designed for reporting to parents.

A teacher, using all available information, is able to furnish parents with a balanced and comprehensive report on a child's progress.

However, if you do wish to receive further detail about your child's SNSA assessment information, you can discuss this with your child's school.

I hope the above provides you with helpful information.

[redacted]

National Improvement Framework Unit
Learning Directorate
Area 2B South, Victoria Quay, Leith, EH6 6QQ

[redacted]

[redacted]

Fri 27-Apr-18 2:49 PM

[redacted]

SNSA parental question

Dear Sirs,

I have been reading the on line information with regard the new SNSA and have followed the link to the parents' page.

My query is in relation to the somewhat unclear section here:

1.1.1 Will you get to see the results?

Teachers will use this information, alongside a wide range of other assessment information, to discuss with you how your child is progressing with their learning, as part of the normal reporting process in your school.

I would be grateful for clarification on the following please:

Can I as a parent request to see my child's results or not?

And, if so, how do I go about this?

Kind regards

[redacted]

7th

Wed 18/04/2018 12:03

[redacted]

Opting Out

Dear Sir/Madam,

I understand from a practitioner that parents can opt out of National tests if they choose to do so as they can from other aspects of School based activity.

May I therefore request a copy of the relevant guidance cited in relation to opting a child out.

Further would the opt out from School based activity relate to on-line Surveys which children complete, GIRFEC and Named Person scheme?

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Sent from my iPad

Suggested response:

Dear [redacted]

Thank you for your enquiry.

The Scottish National Standardised Assessments (SNSA) provide teachers with additional, objective information about a child's progress through Curriculum for Excellence and form a part of much wider assessment information gathered by the teacher during the course of the school session. The teacher uses professional judgement to consider all the assessment evidence available to inform the next steps in a child's learning. No one piece of evidence can provide all that a teacher needs to plan learning for an individual and the SNSA makes a single contribution to that evidence.

The SNSA provides teachers with assessment information not available by other means and teachers would be less equipped when reporting on educational progress to parents.

There is no set procedure established for opting out of the SNSA and we would strongly recommend that you discuss any concerns with your child's school. Similarly, you should consult with your school about matters relating to on-line surveys, Getting It Right for Every Child (GRIFEC) and the Named Person Scheme.

We hope the above provides you with useful information.

8th

From: [redacted]
Sent: 03 April 2018 11:27
To: [redacted]
Cc: National Improvement Framework
Subject: RE: SNSA Testing

Dear [redacted]

I can confirm that the **assessments** (not testing) are not mandated by the Scottish Government. Local Education Authorities are responsible for ensuring that statutory requirements are met and that they are diligent in taking forward nationally agreed policies and guidelines. The **expectation** is that the standardised assessments will be taken by all pupils in P1, P4, P7 and S3 apart from in some very particular circumstances, for example where children have multiple, complex needs. Parents, as they do now, should discuss any concerns about their children's learning and assessment with their teacher.

As [redacted] advised in her original email, the Scottish National Standardised Assessments are a diagnostic tool for teachers to use to inform their professional judgement of where children are at a given time in the school year. Assessment is part of everyday learning and teaching and the intention of all assessment is to assess progress and put in place support where it is needed.

I have also attached, for your information, a publication "*Assessing Children's Progress: A Guide for Parents and Carers*" The section "How is Children's Learning Assessed in Scotland" explains in more detail how assessment works in schools.

<https://beta.gov.scot/publications/assessing-childrens-progress-guide-for-parents-and-carers/National%20Improvement%20Framework%20-%20assessing%20progress%20-%20guide%20for%20parents.pdf?inline=true>

I hope that information is helpful. If you need any further information please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Kind regards

[redacted]

[redacted]

Learning Directorate/2C North/Victoria Quay/Edinburgh/EH6 6QQ

Aonad Frèam-obrach Leasachaidh Nàiseanta//Raon 2C Tuath//Cidhe Bhictòria//Dùn Èideann

From: [redacted]
Sent: 29 March 2018 22:13
To: [redacted]

Cc: National Improvement Framework <nationalimprovementframework@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: SNSA Testing

Dear [redacted]

Could I just clarify with you that the testing is definitely NOT compulsory? The school has told me that it is compulsory ([redacted] has sat the test now as I was told we had no choice and I will be aggrieved to find out that it was not necessary). Your email says its a central part of everyday learning so if you could just clarify whether it is indeed compulsory or not it would be appreciated. Passing that information on to schools is clearly necessary too.

Best wishes

[redacted]

From: [redacted]

Sent: 29 March 2018 12:58

To: [redacted]

Cc: National Improvement Framework <nationalimprovementframework@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: SNSA Testing

Dear [redacted]

Thank you for your email which I am responding to in [redacted] absence.

The Scottish National Standardised Assessments (SNSA) are not compulsory for any of the cohort identified to undertake the assessments, i.e P1, P4, P7 and S3. This is in line with all other forms of assessment, which are a central part of everyday learning and teaching for children and young people. As [redacted] mentioned in her email below, you should discuss this matter with the class teacher or Headteacher.

I hope that answers your question but please do not hesitate to get back in touch if you would like any further information.

Kind regards

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Learning Directorate/2C North/Victoria Quay/Edinburgh/EH6 6QQ

Aonad Frèam-obrach Leasachaidh Nàiseanta//Raon 2C Tuath//Cidhe Bhictòria//Dùn Èideann

From: [redacted]
Sent: 19 March 2018 16:15
To: National Improvement Framework
Subject: RE: SNSA Testing

Dear [redacted]

Thanks for your reply although I don't feel you have answered my question. Are these tests compulsory? You make a statement that there is no benefit from opting out for children and parents. However, particularly at the young age of P1 where I feel they should be solely learning through play and assessments are not necessary, I feel there is no benefit of opting in. We get sufficient feedback from our teacher, we have every confidence in her professional judgement and she does not require testing to know where additional help may be required.

Can you please clarify, are these tests compulsory?

Many thanks

[redacted]
Sent from my Samsung Galaxy smartphone.

----- Original message -----

From: nationalimprovementframework@gov.scot
Date: 19/03/2018 15:25 (GMT+00:00)
To: [redacted], nationalimprovementframework@gov.scot
Subject: RE: SNSA Testing

Good afternoon [redacted]

The Scottish National Standardised Assessments are a diagnostic tool used to assess children's progress and put in place support where a need is identified. As these assessments are designed to help teachers understand whether children need additional help or support, there is no benefit to opting out for parents or for children. If you are concerned about any aspect of your child's learning and assessment then please discuss this with the class teacher.

If you require any further information then please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Regards,

[redacted]
National Improvement Framework Unit
Learning Directorate
Area 2B South, Victoria Quay, Leith, EH6 6QQ
[redacted]
[redacted]

From: [redacted]

Sent: 14 March 2018 09:40

To: National Improvement Framework

Subject: SNSA Testing

Hi

Can you please advise if the SNSA testing is mandatory, particularly in relation to P1 children?

Many thanks

[redacted]

9th

From: [redacted]

Sent: 29 March 2018 12:48

To: [redacted]

Cc: National Improvement Framework <nationalimprovementframework@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: P1 SNSA

Dear [redacted]

Thank you for your email regarding your [redacted] and the Scottish National Standardised Assessments.

You should contact your [redacted] class teacher or the school Headteacher to discuss withdrawing her from the standardised assessments.

I have also attached a link to the publication *Assessing Children's Progress: A Guide for Parents and Carers* for your information.

<https://beta.gov.scot/publications/assessing-childrens-progress-guide-for-parents-and-carers/National%20Improvement%20Framework%20-%20assessing%20progress%20-%20guide%20for%20parents.pdf?inline=true>

kind regards

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Learning Directorate/2C North/Victoria Quay/Edinburgh/EH6 6QQ

Aonad Frèam-obrach Leasachaidh Nàiseanta//Raon 2C Tuath//Cidhe Bhictòria//Dùn Èideann

From: [redacted]

Sent: 24 March 2018 20:39

To: National Improvement Framework

Subject: P1 SNSA

Dear Sir/Madam

Our [redacted]. She is due to sit the SNSA next term. Please can you inform us of what we need to do to have her withdrawn from this assessment.

Many thanks

[redacted]

10th

From: [redacted]
Sent: 29 March 2018 13:00
To: [redacted]
Cc: National Improvement Framework <nationalimprovementframework@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Opt out

Dear [redacted]

Thank you for your email regarding your [redacted] and the Scottish National Standardised Assessments.

You should contact your [redacted] class teacher or the school Headteacher to discuss withdrawing him from the standardised assessments.

I have attached a link to the publication "Assessing Children's Progress: A Guide for Parents and Carers" for your information.

<https://beta.gov.scot/publications/assessing-childrens-progress-guide-for-parents-and-carers/National%20Improvement%20Framework%20-%20assessing%20progress%20-%20guide%20for%20parents.pdf?inline=true>

kind regards

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Learning Directorate/2C North/Victoria Quay/Edinburgh/EH6 6QQ Aonad Frèam-obrach
Leasachaidh Nàiseanta//Raon 2C Tuath//Cidhe Bhictòria//Dùn Èideann

-----Original Message-----

From: [redacted]
Sent: 24 March 2018 02:08
To: National Improvement Framework
Subject: Opt out

Hi there,

[redacted] in August. How do I go about opting out of standardised testing for him?

Thanks!

[redacted]

Sent from my iPhone

11th

From: [redacted]

Sent: 03 May 2018 17:53

To: National Improvement Framework <nationalimprovementframework@gov.scot>

Subject: P1 testing

Hello,

I want to write to share my thoughts on the snsa testing particularly in p1. I am very much against testing in p1. At this stage of schooling children should be being encouraged to play and learn through play. This type of testing goes against this line of thought. I feel that children of this age should not feel the stress involved with testing particularly if they are struggling and find question after question hard. This can cause a child to feel a sense of failure which can be detrimental at any age let alone a child so early in their learning. We do not want to put children off of learning.

I feel that the way that the test is undertaken is not really appropriate. Many schools do not have enough computers or laptops to be able to facilitate these tests. Also I feel children of this age do not have the computer skills to be able to complete these online tests. I know my p1 child has never, until recently at school, used a lap top and will struggle to control the cursor and click appropriately let alone be able to scroll down. I understand that I pads can be used but not all schools have these available. I think that children of this age may without support just click randomly and in order to support children the tests would need to be done in small groups taking a member of staff away from other duties. In schools with large rolls this could take considerable time and thus other children missing out on potential support from pupil support assistants that they need.

To surmise I feel that early years education should not be about testing for government statistics and that more should be done to encourage and facilitate a play based approach to learning to provide our children with the ability to use their imaginations and have a chance to take risks and develop their resilience.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Sent from my iPhone

12th

From: [redacted]

Sent: 17 May 2018 14:05

To: National Improvement Framework <nationalimprovementframework@gov.scot>

Subject: Re: Question

Many thanks,

[redacted]

From: [redacted] on behalf of nationalimprovementframework@gov.scot
<nationalimprovementframework@gov.scot>

Sent: 17 May 2018 10:50:57

To: [redacted]; nationalimprovementframework@gov.scot

Subject: RE: Question

Hi [redacted]

Sorry for taking some time to respond. The Scottish National Standardised Assessments (SNSA) are not compulsory for any of the cohort identified to undertake the assessments, i.e P1, P4, P7 and S3. This is in line with all other forms of assessment, which are a central part of everyday learning and teaching for children and young people. If you are concerned about any aspect of your child's learning and assessment then please discuss this with the class teacher.

Many thanks,

[redacted]

National Improvement Framework Unit

Learning Directorate

Area 2C North, Victoria Quay, Leith, EH6 6QQ

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted]

Sent: 10 May 2018 11:12

To: National Improvement Framework

Subject: Re: Question

Hi, sorry to bother you but I've not had a reply. I'd like to know if the standardised assessments are optional.

Thanks,

[redacted]

From: [redacted]
Sent: 08 May 2018 16:32:09
To: nationalimprovementframework@gov.scot
Subject: Re: Question

Thanks. I understand what the assessments are, I'd like to know if they are optional however.

Many thanks,

[redacted]

From: [redacted] On Behalf Of National Improvement Framework
Sent: 08 May 2018 13:53
To: [redacted]; National Improvement Framework
<nationalimprovementframework@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Question

Good afternoon [redacted]

The Scottish National Standardised Assessments are a diagnostic tool used to assess children's progress and put in place support where a need is identified. As these assessments are designed to help teachers understand whether children need additional help or support, there is no benefit to opting out for parents or for children. If you are concerned about any aspect of your child's learning and assessment then please discuss this with the class teacher.

If you require any further information then please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Kind regards,

[redacted]
National Improvement Framework Unit
Learning Directorate
Area 2B South, Victoria Quay, Leith, EH6 6QQ
[redacted]

-----Original Message-----

From: [redacted]
Sent: 05 May 2018 23:21
To: National Improvement Framework
Subject: Question

Hello,

Just wondering if the standardised assessments are optional? Can a parent request that their child doesn't take part?

Many thanks.

13th

From: [redacted]

Sent: 02 May 2018 06:36

To: National Improvement Framework <nationalimprovementframework@gov.scot>

Subject: Standardised Testing

As both an Early Years worker and a mother of a soon to be [redacted] I am absolutely disgusted by the way in which these tests have been dressed up in the guise of the 'child's best interest'. If this was the case information for parents would have been distributed prior to August 2017 and not drip fed down the line a year later.

All studies, research and guidance, (most created by the Scottish Government) contradicts to the very core what you are carrying out in P1 with this out dated, unnecessary testing model.

As a government you are robbing this generation of their childhood. If you NEED this idea of assessed children's knowledge, for your stats figures (pretending it is for anything else is quite frankly insulting!) then introduce qualified playworkers and early years workers into primary schools, who have the ability to promote learning, development and opportunities through play. Who are trained to observe children, who work with children, following their lead. Do this as part of a thought through commitment in promoting and protecting children's RIGHT to play!

Let's create teaching environments that enhance a child's natural curiosity, let's break the mould by revolutionising schooling for children in Scotland, let's lead by example and create a model that GETS IT RIGHT FOR EVERY CHILD, naturally BUILDING THEIR AMBITION both protecting and promoting their FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT TO PLAY!

I ask of this government to be courageous, to truly mean what they say when they discuss CHILD AT THE CENTRE, SHANARRI and CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE.

Eradicate standardised testing in the early years and whole heartedly support the fight against ACES, poor childhood mental health and obesity. SUPPORT, ENCOURAGE, PROMOTE PLAY!

When we truly consider the child as paramount and their well-being holistically surely you must agree that the need to focus on such areas are far superior and should take precedent over these ridiculous and unnecessary tests?

Regards

[redacted]

14th

From: [redacted]

Sent: 23 April 2018 16:51

To: National Improvement Framework <nationalimprovementframework@gov.scot>

Subject: SNSA question

Good afternoon

I have just received the leaflet around the standardised assessments.

[redacted] just now and will be completing one. I have read the Q&A section and it advised that the teachers will use the information to feedback to me around how [redacted] is doing.

I would personally really like to see the questions and answers that she chooses. Can this be made available to me upon request or would I need to place a subject access request to gain access to this information?

Kind Regards

[redacted]

15th

Subject: Concerns about SNSA in Primary 1

Sent: 9 May 2018 13:09

From: [redacted]

To: nationalimprovementframework@gov.scot

Cc:

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to raise my serious concerns regarding the new primary 1 national tests (SNSA). The tests are unreliable at best and damaging at worst. Similar baseline tests in England and the United States have had no impact on improving attainment and to impose them on local authorities and schools without consulting them first is ill-informed, a waste of taxpayers' money and undermines trust in teachers' professional judgements.

I fear that next year teachers will be prepping p1s for them despite assurances from policy makers that there is no need to do this as they are for data collection purposes only to help teachers plan next steps. Play will fall by the wayside (despite neuroscientific evidence that unambiguously proves this is how young children learn best) and I foresee p1 'league tables' becoming a reality down the line. Schools will be asked to explain why pupil performance hasn't improved compared to previous years and before you can say 'play not tests', the 'academic creep' will have clawed its way down to nurseries and pre-schoolers will soon be forced to do homework and learn spurious, de-contextualised facts in attempt to achieve inappropriate targets, outcomes and benchmarks for their age group.

This flies in the face of the overwhelming body of evidence which proves young children naturally develop at different rates and that many are not ready at 4/5 for formal education (and that this is totally developmentally appropriate and does not affect their attainment down the line if they don't start reading and writing till later - in fact it can often have a negative impact if they do start too soon).

International comparisons of countries which don't start their children's formal education till 6 or 7 (88% of countries worldwide) show they have a narrower attainment gap in classes, less of a rich/poor divide and children with fewer mental health issues. They also regularly top the PISA rankings in all areas. Finland is one such country and it is no great coincidence that it also came no. 1 in the UN's World Happiness Report this year. It knocked Norway off the top spot and it was Denmark before that - all countries which regularly outperform us in PISA tests and all of which send their children to school later than we do.

The other reasons why I disagree with testing at such a young age are summed up in the 'Play Not Tests in p1' Upstart Scotland campaign which I strongly encourage you to read: <http://www.upstart.scot/play-not-tests-in-p1-campaign/>

I am also extremely concerned that schools are under no obligation to tell parents their children are being tested and therefore the vast majority of parents don't know this is happening. It seems particularly stealthy and underhand. Testing p1s, not informing their parents about it and that they have the right to withdraw them is unfair and unacceptable.

I trust you will feed these views back to the relevant parties and I urge you to join Upstart Scotland to support the campaign for an introduction of a kindergarten stage for 3-7 year olds. The evidence shows that that is what is best for young children and society would also reap the benefits down the line with happier, healthier, better educated citizens: the key priorities of the National Improvement Framework.

I look forward to hearing from you regarding these concerns.

Yours faithfully,

[redacted]

16th

From: [redacted] On Behalf Of National Improvement Framework

Sent: 18 May 2018 15:02

To: [redacted]; National Improvement Framework

<nationalimprovementframework@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: SNSA

Dear [redacted]

The Scottish National Standardised Assessments are a diagnostic tool used to assess children's progress and put in place support where a need is identified. The Scottish National Standardised Assessments (SNSA) are not compulsory for any of the cohort identified to undertake the assessments, i.e P1, P4, P7 and S3. This is in line with all other forms of assessment, which are a central part of everyday learning and teaching for children and young people. As these assessments are designed to help teachers understand whether children need additional help or support, there is no benefit to opting out for parents or for children. If you are concerned about any aspect of your child's learning and assessment then please discuss this with the class teacher.

Kind regards,

[redacted]

National Improvement Framework Unit

Learning Directorate

Area 2C North, Victoria Quay, Leith, EH6 6QQ

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted]

Sent: 18 May 2018 09:25

To: National Improvement Framework

Subject: SNSA

FAO John Swinney and David Leng

I would like some clarification please on the standardised assessments for p1. I have been told that these tests are not compulsory and parents can, if they wish, withdraw their child from taking the test in p1.

I would be very grateful if you can confirm this for me

Kindest Regards

[redacted]

17th

From: [redacted] On Behalf Of National Improvement Framework

Sent: 18 May 2018 15:00

To: [redacted]

;National Improvement Framework <nationalimprovementframework@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: P1 tests

Dear [redacted]

The Scottish National Standardised Assessments are a diagnostic tool used to assess children's progress and put in place support where a need is identified. The Scottish National Standardised Assessments (SNSA) are not compulsory for any of the cohort identified to undertake the assessments, i.e P1, P4, P7 and S3. This is in line with all other forms of assessment, which are a central part of everyday learning and teaching for children and young people. As these assessments are designed to help teachers understand whether children need additional help or support, there is no benefit to opting out for parents or for children. If you are concerned about any aspect of your child's learning and assessment then please discuss this with the class teacher.

Kind regards,

[redacted]

National Improvement Framework Unit

Learning Directorate

Area 2C North, Victoria Quay, Leith, EH6 6QQ

[redacted]

-----Original Message-----

From: [redacted]

Sent: 17 May 2018 15:03

To: National Improvement Framework

Subject: P1 tests

Please could you let me know if the tests are compulsory?

Thank you

[redacted]

Sent from my iPhone

18th

From: [redacted]

Sent: 07 June 2018 13:50

To: [redacted]

Cc: [redacted]

Subject: RE: Reminder : FOI request - SNSA in schools resubmitted

[redacted],

The minutes of all Teacher Panel meetings are released into the public domain once they are signed off by the DFM and the Panel. Therefore you may not be required to provide this specific document if it is already published. All cleared Teacher Panel minutes can be found here - <https://beta.gov.scot/groups/teacher-panel/> .

Thanks

[redacted]

19th

From: [redacted]

Sent: 11 May 2018 12:17

To: [redacted]

Cc: [redacted]; Leng D (David); [redacted]

Subject: RE: SNSA s

[redacted]

I hope you are well.

Thanks for your note. I have discussed it and my reply with David Leng who is much more familiar than I am with the day to day running of the assessments.

Staff in all schools have been offered training on how best to administer the assessments and on using the reports that are generated to drive improvement. Schools do however have flexibility on how and when they administer the assessments. As the assessments are on-line we are aware that in some instances classes are accessing computer suites within their own school or in nearby high schools. Equally some schools are using individual tablets and notebook computers. The important thing is that the assessments are not high stakes and used to provide diagnostic information on pupil progress. This should provide part of the information passed to parents as part of the school's normal parental reporting process – although, again, schools have flexibility over how and what they tell parents about the assessments. Given the diagnostic nature of the assessments and the fact that they are designed to be used as part of everyday teaching and learning it may be that some schools are not wanting to raise the profile of the assessments. We did as you say produce information for parents on the assessments, which you helped us with, and which is the primary source of information.

That said, I do appreciate that partly as a result of the way the assessments have been reported by the press, there is a level of anxiety and uncertainty about them among parents. This clearly won't be helped if they are feeling that they can't find out what they want to know about the assessments or are not being fully informed by the school. I imagine the increase in queries you have been receiving will be a result of the increase in the number of assessments that schools have been doing since the Easter holidays. We will continue to reiterate to local authorities the need to ensure that all schools and parents are fully informed about the assessments – Graeme Logan and Elizabeth Morrison are currently in the middle of a round of discussions with all 32 LA directors and we will make sure we raise local information for parents (on SNSA and more broadly) in all of the upcoming discussions. David and his team would also welcome the opportunity to hear directly from parents on their experience of SNSA this year as we look to improve things for 2018/19 and beyond – I have asked him to contact you to discuss how best this can be done.

On your point about oversight of SNSA, the group that Donna used to Chair was the NIF Strategic Group and its responsibilities, including SNSA, now lie with the SEC (and to an extent with the CAB too), although clearly it hasn't been on the agenda at recent meetings. In setting those agendas the DFM wanted to cover the issues that have been the main focus of his attention recently, eg teacher supply, the reform agenda and the regional improvement collaboratives. The vast majority of feedback we have been getting on the assessments (from the schools that have been running them and in discussions with LA directors) has been positive and we haven't been made aware of particular issues – other than the emerging concerns about the P1 assessments (David and his team are currently working with a number of schools/local authorities who are running the P1 assessments to get a better understanding of the issues). SNSA is on the draft agenda for the June

meeting of the Council and we are anticipating a discussion around how the assessments have gone this year and what lessons can be learned to help improve things moving forward. I am of course happy to meet with you at any point to discuss SNSA and any other related issues – or happy to discuss by phone if that is easier.

[redacted]

From: [redacted]

Sent: 03 May 2018 15:13

To: [redacted]

Cc: [redacted]

Subject: SNSA s

Hi[redacted],

We have received quite a number of parent queries in the past few days concerning the SNSAs. Various different stories but all concerning whole classes and in some cases multiple schools/ large S3 year groups all sitting the assessment at the same time in computer labs.

These parents are receiving absolutely no information about the purpose of the assessment or indeed anything about it.

In some cases whole classes are being marched to the nearest secondary to complete it. The only communication the parents are receiving is the permission slip to take them out of the school.

So, where exactly is the SNSA programme sitting? Does it lie with the SEC, CAB or is it separate? Since the group Donna chaired finished I have heard no mention of the issues at any meeting I have attended.

Parents are crying out for basic information - at present there is nothing we can signpost them to to alleviate their fears apart from the SNSA website. Has any parent info or awareness raising ever been agreed? I know that there is info on assessment at <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00518443.pdf> which we worked with [redacted] on but much of the information does not match what parents are seeing on the ground.

How do you suggest we deal with these questions?

[redacted]

Sent from my iPhone