Terms of Reference: Data Management Review Group

Context

1.   Responses to the Workload Challenge said that the way data entry and management was carried out in their school was burdensome and, in many cases, unnecessary. Teachers reported spending hours recording data on multiple programmes, analysing, and having to report in different ways for different audiences. Recording, inputting, monitoring and analysing data was reported as being burdensome by a majority of the sample respondents (56%).

2.   Many respondents noted that the tasks they undertook were not 'unnecessary' or 'unproductive', rather they recognised that they were essential parts of teaching. However, it was the level of detail (63% of respondents); duplication (41%) and bureaucracy (41%) that occurred during these tasks that they felt were the 'unnecessary' or 'unproductive' aspects of them.[1]

3.   Ofsted has made clear its requirements regarding data collection in the School Inspection Handbook (September 2015, paragraph 28). They have stated that they do not expect performance and pupil-tracking information to be presented in a particular format, as the school should provide information in the format it would ordinarily use to monitor the progress of pupils.[2]

4.   The Commission on Assessment Without Levels was set up by the Government to ensure that pupil assessment provides an accurate picture of a pupil's attainment and progress without placing a bureaucratic burden on teachers. The government wants to reduce central prescription and believes that teachers should have the freedom to develop formative assessment systems that best fit the needs of their pupils.

Purpose of the Group

5.   The data management group has been set up to build on work of the Commission on Assessment Without Levels in encouraging schools to reduce the burden of unnecessary data collection. It will give consideration to how and why data is collected in order to generate more efficient and effective practices. In addition to this, the group will look at a range of other issues related to in-school data collection and management. The group will meet over a period of up to 6 months, and will be asked to make specific recommendations for action at the end of this period with a core aim of reducing overall workload burden in schools and improving efficiency.

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[1]https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/workload-challenge-analysis-of-teacher-responses

[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-from-september-2015

6.   In relation to all data collected in schools, the group will:

- review current data practices in schools related to assessment and monitoring pupil progress and attainment, in the light of any recommendations of the Commission for Assessment Without Levels;
- examine the impact of data collections for other purposes (such as safeguarding, attendance and governance) in schools with a view to making recommendations for improvement;
- explore the evidence of what drives unnecessary data entry, re-inputting, collection and monitoring in schools (such as requirements from government; school leadership; accountability systems) and consider solutions for encouraging culture change;
- explore the evidence of effective practice, including examples of what works in maintained and independent schools in the context of data management;
- review the procurement and standards of management information systems in schools;
- consider approaches which could reduce the overall workload burden on teachers whilst supporting teacher professionalism and judgement;
- set out principles for good data management practices and processes for both statutory and school-led purposes to create a shared understanding of what data is necessary within schools and how it should be used; and
- consider ways in which the outputs of the group can be disseminated and the role for government and its agencies in doing this.

Scope

7.   The Data Management Group will take forward any recommendations of the Commission on Assessment Without Levels on collecting data for the purposes of assessment and accountability, including the use of pupil attainment and progress data in schools. The group will also examine the impact of data collection for other purposes, the drivers of unnecessary workload related to data management, and the implementation of the single data standard (as set out by the Information Standards Board here: http://data.gov.uk/education-standards/).

8.   The Data Management Group will, through the Secretariat and the Chair, make links to the Department for Education's Data Exchange Project, examining the flow of data between schools and from schools to government. The group will also make links to the review groups examining the workload implications of marking and lesson planning in schools. The group will report regularly to Ministers and to the Department's teacher and head teacher union roundtable.

9.   Funding or endorsement of particular management information systems or suppliers will be out of scope of this group.

Meetings

10.   It is expected that the panel will be in place for up to six months. Participation will take the form of face-to-face meetings. These meetings will usually take place in

London and be hosted by the department. All correspondence for meetings will be sent via email. The Secretariat will circulate an agenda and papers before each meeting.

11.   Discussion at the meetings will be confidential. No public statements which could be attributable to an individual member should be made, through any medium, by any member of the group.

Outputs

12.   The group will take forward the recommendations on data management from the Commission on Assessment Without Levels and report on progress during the course of their work. The group will aim to present a report to the Secretary of State and Ministers in Spring 2016. These should include:

- a set of principles for data management in schools that assure effective and efficient practice, raise standards for pupils and remove unnecessary workload; and
- recommendations about effective data management and consider whether guidance about effective practice and/or case studies about what works in schools might be necessary.

13.   The recommendations must be approved by Ministers before publication.