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THE 4 MOST POPULAR METHODS OF TRACKING

Optimum have specialised in the field of tracking pupil progress and attainment since 2005.

We have worked with over 2000 primary schools across the UK and overseas with our award winning software, OTrack. In March 2016 OTrack won the Education Resources Award for ICT Tools for Leadership Management & Assessment in recognition of our achievements. The judges liked the fact that OTrack is customisable, and that we configure the system to meet individual school needs. We've also had some excellent comments in recent Ofsted reports!

What follows below is a whitepaper written by Matt Bramley, the Training & Sales Director at Optimum.

> *Matt has worked in education for a number of years and has seen many changes in that time. None more so than the removal of levels. He has been involved with OTrack during a great period of growth. Optimum now employ over 30 staff in our office at Doncaster, South Yorkshire.*

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INTRODUCTION

Customisable reporting really sets OTrack apart from many other pupil tracking systems.

Over the past couple of years, this advantage has become more and more prevalent, and we've visited many schools to help build a system that works for each school. My colleagues and I have posted various blogs about these meetings on our website at optimumotrack.co.uk/category/case-studies

The decision to remove levels was partly due to the fact that schools were getting too hung up on measuring the number of points progress for pupils, rather than looking at the breadth and depth of knowledge shown in a particular subject. The new curriculum, and the way it is now tested, moves us away from the status quo that's been around for many years and has forced schools into a total re-think of how to record attainment and progress.

This whitepaper is the result of those consultations, and sets out what we've found to be the most popular methods of tracking since the launch of Assessing without Levels (AWL).

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1

National Curriculum Age Bands.

At the very start of our journey into AWL, we set about touring the country to consult our user base, and to get their feedback on how OTrack should work in a life after levels.

Our findings at the time were that primary schools didn't want to move too far away from levels. We were leaving a system where everyone spoke the same language. Schools knew roughly what to expect when Ofsted made the call, and there was a general consensus that a set number of points per year (and Key Stage) was expected wherever you were.

This prompted us to come up with our 'Best Fit' system in 2014. Schools were given the freedom to choose a group of letters or codes that related to a programme of study. By far, the most popular terminology used in the early days was 'Beginning', 'Developing' and 'Secure'. Following subsequent releases from the DfE, this has now progressed with more schools wanting to show that pupils have reached a level of greater depth. We launched 'Deeper Learning' in 2015 which enabled schools to add several 'depth codes' to their tracking.

While this method of tracking remains very popular, there has been a lot of feedback from our schools with regard to Ofsted inspections. It appears that Ofsted are more interested in looking at the percentage of children at Age Related Expectation (ARE), and progress is determined by looking at books!

Which leads us to...

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2

Point-In-Time Assessment.

Having had the opportunity to visit senior leaders in schools all over the country and being involved with various headteacher conferences, it appears there is a large shift towards Point-In-Time Assessments (PITA).

When setting up a new assessment system, there is always a balance to strike between providing the level of data required, and managing teacher workloads. So, schools have started to ask themselves what is important. The foremost questions tend to be;

- What percentages of pupils are working at ARE?
- Has that percentage increased from previous assessments?

This is where PITA comes in. This assessment model is set up in its simplest form, and to an extent, mirrors the end of key stage assessment.

For example, if the expectation for a child is to be at ARE by the end of the Key Stage, then he/she would be expected to be at ARE all the way through primary school. No matter when you assess the child, the expectation is that he/she is at ARE at each subsequent assessment point.

For those children who are below expectations, schools are using intervention strategies to try and bring them up to the expected standards. This results in a non-linear assessment model that is in line with the ethos of the current curriculum. Ofsted have reported that they find it easy to understand when headteachers have presented tracking data using this method.

Progress can still be evidenced by showing the work in books and either recording termly targets or selecting a 'progress marker' in OTrack.

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Standardised Scores.

The beauty of tracking standardised scores is that, again, it can work in the same way as end of Key Stage assessments. We are finding that many headteachers are keen to use this method as a way of triangulating assessment within school.

The idea behind this method is that the teacher records a standardised score as an outcome of a test. The school decides which score is deemed to be the ARE, and the tracking system does the rest. As we all know, different subjects are tested differently, with varied numbers of questions. So, tracking systems need to be robust enough to cater for this.

Recording scores from a test, of course, helps with moderation. Many schools suffered at the end of KS2 tests in 2016 because they didn't have an accurate view of where pupils were at. By backing up teacher assessment with testing, the problems can be identified a lot earlier, and interventions put in place before it is too late.

By working closely with our schools, we have found that they all do things slightly differently, but with some degree of commonality. None more so than with scores tracking. There are many excellent resources out there for termly tests, and we aim to cater for all of them.

Another variation of this is 'Age Tracking', i.e. recording the age at which you feel the child is working in years and months.

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4

Formative-Only.

In 2014 we launched Class Track, our first venture into formative assessment. We wanted to make sure that OTrack had all the functionality needed to cope with life after levels.

Class Track allows teachers to record data against curriculum objectives on a daily or termly basis. These objectives can be taken straight from the DfE National Curriculum, or can be customised by the school. We also work with some of the most popular curriculum providers in the country.

Going back to a previous point, the schools that use this really well, feel that they have struck the right balance between teacher workload and their data requirements. Good formative assessment can evidence progress without the need for summative assessment. Of course, this becomes very useful when feeding back to parents too.

The danger comes when formative assessment becomes a 'box-ticking' exercise to create a summative judgment. I have a future white paper coming out on this subject, so please keep an eye out for it.

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SO WHAT'S NEXT?

If you have any questions about which is the best model for you, and how it should be implemented in your school, then please feel free to contact me. I will be more than happy to help.

Phone 01302 360246 or
Email matt.bramley@optimumotrack.co.uk

I look forward to working with you and revolutionising the way you track your pupils!

Keep an eye out for my future White Papers. I'll be releasing a new one every month.

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