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How to tell you have made a difference: their happy faces speak thousand words – keep a photographic record

Measure for measures

How to keep track of pupils without getting bogged down in even more paperwork. **Susanna Pinkus** checks up on monitoring

Booster groups, mentoring, precision teaching and guided reading: these are just some of the measures a special needs co-ordinator (Senco) uses to improve pupils' self-esteem and learning outcomes.

But how much impact do they actually have? And is it even possible to measure progress in these aspects of a school life without burdening ourselves with yet more paperwork? Here are some commonly asked questions and answers: **What different forms of tracking can we set up to measure progress?** Tracking systems broadly fall into two categories –

qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative tracking tells the story of how school measures may affect individuals. Quantitative tracking gives an overview of trends in school and how different groups/cohorts may be performing as compared with peers locally and nationally. It is essential to integrate both types of tracking when following the progress of pupils in your school.

Teachers at my school already feel overloaded with work. How can I motivate them to start collecting more data?

In my view, tracking is not something which should generally be additional to evidence already existing in school. Think creatively with

Top tips for setting up tracking systems

Remember that to maximise validity, the teacher directly involved should not carry out the evaluations.

Don't assume that all tracking has to be written. Children's shining faces, as they play happily with others at break time, could be a perfect example of where your social skills' teaching has been successful. Capture these special moments on film for a "Golden Moments" board which is prominently displayed in school. Send one to the parents too (and keep one for yourself in a treasured book).

colleagues to locate places where evidence already exists. For example, using an administrator to photocopy selected work from a pre-selected sample of children in September, February and June will demonstrate school impact and progress, with very minimal additional work needing to be undertaken. Work sampling is most meaningful to staff and pupils when accompanied by a verbatim piece in the words of the child, explaining their story behind the work.

We do a lot in my school to boost children's self-esteem. Is it possible to track and measure the impact of this?

The *PASS Survey – Pupils' Attitudes to School and Self – administered online, is an excellent way to screen all pupils for self-esteem at different points in the year. Screen whole year groups rather than selected cohorts – you may well be surprised by the results. You can use the data to focus on the variables that are significant in your school. PASS will analyse all the data for you.

What types of qualitative tracking systems can be implemented in school to measure progress in self-esteem?

Ways to monitor progress in self-esteem include asking the children what difference sessions have made to them and finding ways to record their responses. Anonymous questionnaires, documented conversations, informal observations or narrative pieces explaining the impact of interventions from the child's perspective, can all be useful and illuminating. Although class assessments will be ongoing, agree strategic points in the year when data will be collated and assessed for tracking so that it can also

be compared up on year. **How can we use existing evidence to inform our tracking procedures?** One straightforward way is to use school computer systems to re-collate evidence that would be useful for monitoring and tracking purposes. For example, could English as an Additional Language, special educational needs and medical information known by different post-holders be integrated onto one A4 side on your system? This may be a helpful aid in pinpointing who should be a tracking priority.

How do we know that the child is still making progress when a particular intervention finishes?

To ensure continued progress, the best systems incorporate tracking children over time. Track children you're focusing on termly and then "spot-check" for a period beyond the first year. This can be done quite easily, and if concerns crop up again, refresher courses can enable children and their progress to be revisited in one swoop.

Do we need to track all children all the time?

Not usually. Depending on your objective, you don't need to formally track all children all the time. Strategically sample work at three points in the year. Sometimes it is helpful to target children such as those at the top, middle and bottom of the class group ■

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*Call PASS on 0790 331 3425 or visit its website: www.pass-survey.com