

CONNECT

Evidence-based policy and
practice in education

**KNOWLEDGE IN
THE LIGHT OR
STRATEGY IN THE
DARK?**



AUTUMN 2019 IN THIS ISSUE

Teacher workload
and assessment
The CEM Listening
Programme



Welcome to the Autumn issue of **CEM CONNECT!**

At CEM, our purpose is to help teachers use evidence to transform learning for all.

We already work with teachers in the UK and many international schools, and the quality of our assessments is widely recognised. In June this year, CEM joined the University of Cambridge family in a partnership between Cambridge Assessment and Cambridge University Press.

Joining the Cambridge family is a hugely exciting opportunity for us to strengthen our expertise, develop the services we offer you, and continue to support you with the best evidence, informed by valid and reliable assessment (p3).

CEM's aim is to support evidence-based teaching. Group Director of Assessment Research and Development at Cambridge Assessment, Tim Oates CBE, looks at some of the threats and opportunities presented by evidence-based policy and practice in education in England (p6 and 7).

We work closely with teachers and educational professionals to understand the challenges of the changing landscape of assessment and data. The CEM Listening Programme is an opportunity for you to join a wider evidence-based educational community, share your thoughts, and influence and inspire the next generation of assessment (p8 and 9).

Effective assessment has to balance between all other requirements of teaching and teacher workload is a perennial problem. We know that a better understanding of assessment and the information you need from assessment data can help to reduce teachers' workload (p4 and 5).

The InCAS assessment provides powerful data that helps teachers identify individual needs and develop detailed learning plans for each individual child. Our case study on Sam shows how objective data can support teacher judgement to have a positive impact (p10 and 11).

We hope you enjoy this issue of CEM Connect. If there is anything you would like to see in our next issue, do let us know at info@cem.org



You don't have to change the world
to make theirs a little brighter

Do you know a current teacher who deserves a thank you?

The Dedicated Teacher Awards invite students, teachers or anyone with an inspiring teacher story to share it with us so we can find and celebrate the world's most dedicated teachers.

Do you know a teacher who never fails to wow classes with his or her teaching methods, or maybe someone who is always there with kind words at a difficult time? We want to hear about them!

Nominate your dedicated teacher by 29th November 2019 go to: dedicatedteacher.cambridge.org



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Brighter Thinking

Better Learning

Building Brighter Futures Together

CEM - The newest member of the **CAMBRIDGE FAMILY**

At CEM our aim is simple – we use world-class evidence to help teachers understand and support the children they work with.

We do this by helping teachers turn data into knowledge, by bridging the gap between research and practice, and by providing evidence to support good decision-making.

Everything we do is firmly rooted in evidence, and our strong research grounding has flourished since we began our journey over 30 years ago.

We are delighted to share the news that as of 1st June 2019, CEM became part of the University of Cambridge family, having been jointly acquired by Cambridge Assessment and Cambridge University Press. As a large-scale UK and international assessment and publishing group, Cambridge shares our approach to improving education for all.

A SHARED VISION – USING EVIDENCE TO IMPROVE EDUCATION FOR ALL

We are thrilled to be part of the Cambridge family, a move which will help us to grow and enhance the services we provide, further strengthening our evidence-informed approach. Working together, we know we can help teachers meet the challenges they face far more effectively and efficiently, and we will continue to offer brilliant insight and support to teachers worldwide.

We've built a solid foundation and joining the Cambridge family further strengthens the strong academic and research heritage we value so much.

At our core, we make sure that everything we do meets the needs of the teachers, schools

and students. CEM's new partnership with Cambridge will enable us to go from strength to strength, improving our customer experience.

We know there's even more we can do to be more responsive to the needs of teachers and the children they work with, and we're really excited about what the future holds.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

From all the well wishes and positive comments that we have received during this transition period, we know that you are just as excited as we are to see what the future holds.

Our vision and commitment to improving learning for everyone is stronger than ever.

Together with Cambridge, we will:

- Continue to provide high-quality assessments and support, delivering further improvements over the coming years.
- Communicate regularly with you – keeping you informed of progress and changes as we move forward.
- Offer further opportunities for you to help us identify how we can add further value to you and the services we provide.
- Work closely with experts in education, so that you will continue to benefit from an exceptional pool of expertise and a larger body of research evidence.

Thank you for your continued support and we look forward to sharing this next chapter with you.



Teacher workload and **ASSESSMENT**

Once upon a time, teachers were envied by all: finished at three o'clock, six-week holidays and doing something that actually mattered – shaping the next generation.

Since Socrates, teachers have borne the brunt of social frustrations and it has not ended well for them. We may be well past the days of hemlock but there is a multitude of problems that are removing teachers from the profession just as effectively today.

Among external pressures from parents, politicians, streams of negativity in the media and the constant demands for accountability from school leaders, the overwhelming majority of teachers leaving (or even thinking of leaving) are blaming their workload.



THE STATS

In commissioned research into teacher well-being, Ofsted found that:

- A quarter of teachers have had to take time off due to work-related sickness
- 76% of teachers say that their job negatively impacts their mental health
- Nearly a third of teachers report low well-being at work

The benefits of teaching, the idealism and sense of purpose no longer outweigh the consequences of caring.



SO WHAT IS CAUSING THE EXCESSIVE WORKLOAD?

On top of the day to day marking, which could be up to 120 books for any unwitting teacher teaching just four lessons a day, there is planning, adjustments to planning, creating or gathering resources – that's just for the students. This is a necessary workload and actually quite manageable.

The unmanageable workload, the source of stress and disillusionment, in part comes from the amount of data handling now expected from teachers, particularly in regards to assessment. In addition to poring over books, teachers also seem to spend a great deal of their working hours poring over spreadsheets.

The DfE are trying to make good on their promise to combat workload (again) and have stated that Ofsted will 'ignore all tracking data' from September 2019.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Schools will always face demands for accountability, which means that they will never be rid of data, which means that being a teacher will have to include data-handling. That's not a bad thing.

But in order to keep teachers sane and in schools we have to find a way of reducing unnecessary data workload, get rid of assessments for assessments' sake and ensure that data is usable for the classroom.

Therefore, measures such as introducing new teachers to important concepts in assessment (such as validity, reliability, norm and criterion referencing) and offering training in theoretical and technical aspects of assessment might help.

BALANCE

Assessment has to balance between all the other requirements of teaching. A thorough analysis of assessment data could help to pinpoint the precise intervention needed for a pupil, but it's no good if the teacher, exhausted from drowning in meaningless data, cannot deliver the intervention effectively.

With a better understanding of assessment, knowing what information we need from the data can help to reduce teachers' workload, and if they know how to assess effectively then they can teach effectively and students can learn effectively.

DID YOU KNOW?

CEM assessments:

- Do not require pupils to be coached or tutored
- Do not require any teacher marking
- Give quick and clear feedback within 48 hours
- Are easily exported and integrated into school MIS
- Give you evidence in one place to help validate judgements.



Evidence-based policy and practice in education

KNOWLEDGE IN THE LIGHT OR STRATEGY IN THE DARK?

By Tim Oates CBE, Group Director of
Assessment Research and Development, Cambridge Assessment



The term 'evidence-based policy' rose to particular prominence in the early years of the New Labour administration, following the 1997 general election. At that time, the Standards Unit in the Department for Education commissioned research reviews, convened meetings of leading researchers to discuss key issues, and supported the formation of an equivalent to the medical Cochrane Collaboration – synthesising evidence from research which met certain criteria of method and integrity. The Economics and Social Research Council initiated a more strategic and issues-focused process of commissioning research.

The legacy of this time is important; educational journalists remain interested in the outcomes of research projects and programs, politicians do strive to formulate 'evidence-informed' policy, and key bodies such as the Education Endowment Foundation and Education DataLab apply high standards to the execution of research and the determination of recommendations for action. Publications such as TES and SchoolsWeek play a key role in pushing high-quality research to the fore.

RESEARCH AND POLICY

But it should not be forgotten that preceding 1997, educational reform and development in England has enjoyed a fine tradition of proceeding through wide formal consultation, scrutiny by Parliament and royal commissions, formation of policy through green papers and following white papers. All supported by a highly productive research community.

By 2010, the Review of the National Curriculum drew heavily on systematic transnational comparisons, implemented recommendations on 'oracy in every subject' from leading research programs, and used heavily research-derived principles (such as Reynolds' and Farrell's 'fewer things in greater depth' in Primary education) to drive decisions over structure and content.

This is not to say that judgement does not play a part in effective policy-making, or that research provides an answer to every pressing question of policy and practice. For example, we can determine with precision just how many – or rather how few – girls study Physics at A level (8384 girls, representing 22.2pc of the full cohort of 37,765 source IOP). But it is far more complex and demanding to determine the exact nexus of causes for this state of affairs, and more demanding again to put in place effective remedy.

OPPORTUNITIES

As a nation, we now have a tremendous opportunity for increasing the role of sound evidence in policy and practice. We have excellent compilation of accurate data on attainment at 16 and 18, and the National Pupil Database now provides a remarkable

platform for looking at patterns of attainment and progression, following people from entry to school and beyond, up to their point of entry to employment. With this, we have a sense of the performance of schools, of groups, of individuals, of localities and regions. This gives us the facility to monitor the effectiveness of new policy – and act in the light of knowledge, not just push forward strategy in the dark.

THREATS

I sense a solid and enduring commitment to evidence-based policy in England. But there are some threats. Research itself must be well-designed and linked to pressing issues. And I detect loud, misleading messaging about 'kids don't need to remember anything anymore', or naïve oppositions such as knowledge versus skills, or teacher-directed learning versus individualised instruction – all false oppositions which can distract from what the evidence quietly states.

And the worry about some of the naïve futurology which floats around policy circles and surfaces at conferences and in 'rallying cry' speeches is that not only does it have a very poor evidence-base, it also falls into the category of 'manufactured anxiety'. The speeches and statements which focus on an 'uncertain, threatening future' frequently aim to induce anxiety and fear in the audience and thus enhance the authority of the actions being endorsed by the speaker. 'The future's uncertain...so listen to me, and do what I recommend'.

The same syndrome affects some presentations of transnational comparisons: '...the Asian nations are improving so very fast...we are not, so we must be worried about this, so do as I am recommending...'. There are various problems with this approach – an approach adopted either deliberately or unconsciously – ranging from the ethical (arousing fear of others in order to induce compliance) to the technical (what Singapore is doing may or may not constitute any threat to other nations' economic and social activity).

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

[Read the full article on the CEM blog](#)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Tim Oates joined Cambridge Assessment in May 2006 to spearhead the rapidly growing Assessment Research and Development division. His work has included advising on a pan-European 8-level qualifications framework and chairing the UK government's national curriculum review. Tim was awarded CBE in the 2015 New Year's Honours for services to education.



The CEM LISTENING PROGRAMME

CEM is an organization that has always been firmly rooted in research-based assessment and we see the assessment needs of schools, teachers, pupils and parents as the cornerstone of this research.



We are always looking for ways to improve our assessment products, and to maximise the benefits they can bring to teachers and schools and we know that you constantly face a wide variety of issues and challenges within the classroom.

To this end, we are working closely with teachers and educational professionals to understand your perspective in relation to the changing landscape of assessment and data. We are actively looking to speak with schools about:

- how you assess your pupils
- how you use the assessment data
- what challenges you face in this process
- what kind of assessment products would help you in future.

You do not need to currently use CEM assessments to get involved. The CEM Listening Programme is aimed at speaking with a wide range of teachers and school leaders and provides a fabulous opportunity to influence and inspire the next generation of assessment, encourage more effective use of assessment and drive the development of features that make the assessments right for you.



WHAT IS THE CEM LISTENING PROGRAMME?

CEM is dedicated to making sure that we deliver products that meet your needs, and input from practitioners is absolutely key to getting this right.

WHY GET INVOLVED?

Joining the CEM Listening Programme means that you become part of a wider educational community and in return for sharing your thoughts with us you will:

- Have an open invitation to feed your ideas into CEM's assessment and reporting developments
- Be among the first to take a look at, and tell us what you

think about, new reports in development and discover new ways to analyse your data to benefit your pupils and school.

- Receive regular updates and advice on assessment strategy in your school
- Have the option to take part in free assessment training webinars to learn more about how CEM assessment reports work*

**available to schools who participate in the follow-up interview*

BEING PART OF THE CEM LISTENING PROJECT WILL INVOLVE:

- A short online survey, which will take just 10 minutes to complete.
- Opportunities for a follow-up interview focusing on some of the issues arising from the survey questions.
- A chance to trial and test new development and inform the scope of changes to CEM assessments and feedback reports.

If you are interested in taking part in the CEM Listening Programme, or if you have any queries about this, simply contact us at

info@cem.org

and we will arrange to visit your school or have a telephone conversation at a time that is convenient to you.



Case Study

MEET SAM

Sam is a bright 10-year-old, who loves space, stars, planets and computer games.



Sam doesn't always enjoy school and struggles quite a bit in the classroom with concentration, self-regulation and low self-esteem.

He attends a small mainstream school in the North East of England. In his new Year 5 class, there is no learning support assistant. Classes have split year groups but are smaller than average with 25 children in a class.

Sam has had an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) since he was diagnosed as being on the autism spectrum in Year 2. He has a particular and severe sensory aversion to the feel of paper, which makes handwriting and recording work extremely difficult.

ASSESSMENT

Previous assessment results have been wide-ranging and inconsistent for Sam because so many factors can influence his performance. From his KS1 SAT results, Sam has yet to meet the age related expectations set out by the government.

Sam's school started to use CEM's InCAS assessment last year to identify individual development needs, personalise learning and track their students' progress.

The assessment not only covers reading, spelling, mathematics and mental arithmetic but also looks at developing ability and attitudes.

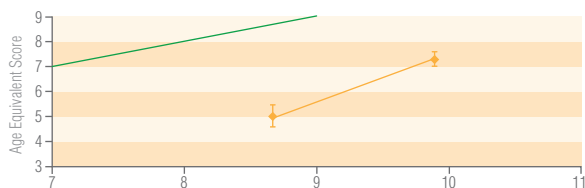
Sam enjoys completing the tasks independently, and can usually concentrate for the majority of the time required. More importantly, because InCAS is adaptive, Sam is faced with questions that are both achievable for him and have just the right amount of challenge to keep his interest.

The adaptive nature of the assessment has helped to boost his confidence in working independently and has removed sensory barriers so his results are a more accurate representation of his actual ability.

SHOWING PROGRESS

Sam's new class teacher uses the InCAS longitudinal charts to see his progress over the last school year. The reports show that while Sam consistently performs below age-related expectations across all areas of assessment, he is making progress, particularly in reading. The improvement in his age equivalent reading score is significant as it shows more than 24 months gained in just over 12 months.

READING

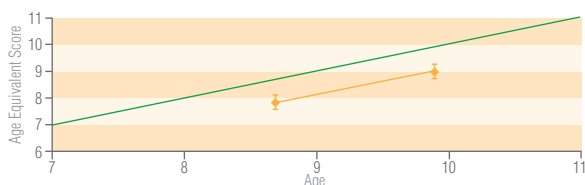


Longitudinal charts show a child's or a cohort's progress and development over a number of years.

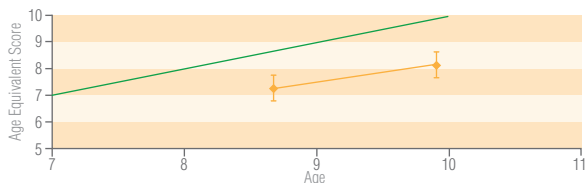
This is a reassuring indication that the targets and interventions that have been put in place for Sam have greatly benefited his learning. His new class teacher can seek advice, replicate and develop the resources used to ensure that this progress continues.

Sam's Mental Arithmetic and Developed Ability scores roughly follow the rate of progress we would expect to see over the period between assessments.

MENTAL ARITHMETIC

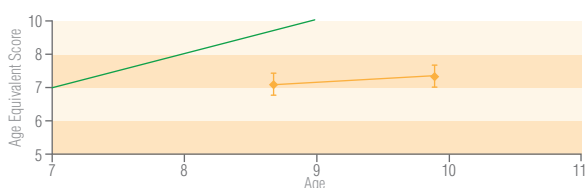


DEVELOPED ABILITY

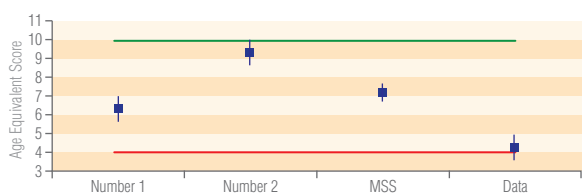


However, the General Maths longitudinal report shows that Sam has not made any significant progress over the course of the year.

GENERAL MATHS



Taking a closer look at the feedback from the scores of the subsections of the assessment modules reveals that Sam performed reasonably well with Number 2 (sorting, patterns, formal arithmetic, problem-solving and algebra) questions but really struggled with data.



The blue boxes represent the age-equivalent scores.



NEXT STEPS

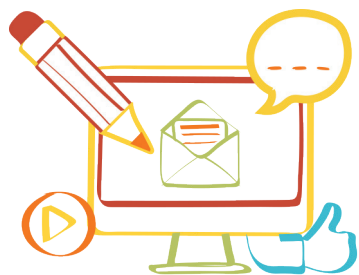
When preparing for Pupil Progress meetings or updating the EHCP, Sam's teacher can use the InCAS reports to set his new targets and request additional support for his maths lessons.

- 1:1 interventions
- Modelling and scaffolding questions
- Plan for data lessons by using his interest in space, stars and planets as a hook.

WEBINARS

Want to find out about our assessments and how they can help you and the young people you teach? Join one of our free webinar sessions!

Visit cem.org/events or contact: info@cem.org



CEMBLOG

Keep up to date with the latest news and research on our blog. Explore the CEM Blog
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LOOK OUT

for OUR New case studies and testimonial videos



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A new online guide to the practicalities of designing and delivering assessment, covering the 'assessment cycle':

- Uses, purposes and types of assessment
- Designing and developing qualifications
- Creating assessment materials – including learning outcomes, assessment objectives, mark schemes and assessment grids
- Standardisation, marking and moderation
- Setting and maintaining standards
- The three 'R's – Roles, responsibilities and regulators

9 weeks | approx 3 hours a week | £225 – £275 (2019), £245 – £295 (2020)