



Progress Test Series: Supporting attainment for all at St Giles Primary CE School

A GL Assessment Case Study

In its long term aspiration to be 'Outstanding', St Giles Primary CE School is working hard to close the achievement gap between different groups of pupils. Staff are using the Progress Test Series to identify exactly where these gaps lie and to evidence the impact their teaching has.

Teachers and senior leaders at St Giles Primary CE School are keenly aware of how important it is to make sure all children achieve well. The school receives the Pupil Premium for nearly half its 365 pupils, a quarter speak English as an additional language and 17% have special educational needs. Yet, in just two years, the school has gone from an Ofsted rating of 'Satisfactory' to 'Good'.

Mark Dakin, head teacher, is keen to ensure this upward trajectory continues. He explains: "We have a diverse range of barriers to learning, from speech and language issues when children join in Reception to a lack of expectation from parents who perhaps didn't have a positive experience of education themselves.

"Meeting the needs of individual children is of paramount importance to us, so we rely on robust and trustworthy assessments to track their progress, especially in core subjects.

"Now that national curriculum levels have been removed, we were looking for something that could help us benchmark our children nationally – and that led us to the *Progress Test Series*."

Tracking without levels

The *Progress Test Series* supports teachers in identifying current levels of attainment in English, maths and science, and helps them monitor progress over time. It can identify those in need of extra help, as well as those who are particularly able. The series is appropriate for children from age 5 to 14.

Mark says: "We've been so impressed. It's easy to administer, doesn't take up too much teacher time, yet we're able to get in-depth information and age related scores. No other assessment we looked at was suitable for use throughout the school or was as accurate.

"Our teachers think the *Progress Test Series* is fantastic. It validates their thoughts and gives them confidence that their judgment is right from an objective point of view. They feel reassured that pupils are achieving the levels they should be.

"It also acts as an early marker for those who may have special educational needs. We consider ourselves adept at spotting these, but having an additional filter ensures no child slips through the net. We've noticed some children being picked up who previously wouldn't have been identified so easily or with such clarity."

Ending learning loss

Now, teachers are able to draw up a list of topics to directly address any gaps in knowledge. "You see percentages on which questions have been answered well and not so well for each class or group. It raises questions about how well a subject has been covered and makes us examine whether we need to look at the way it has been taught or whether there are other barriers we need to look at. This helps focus our efforts on moving children on quicker and faster with immediate effect."

The school is also better able to address the learning loss many children face over the summer holidays. “We’re in an area of deprivation where families that read a lot are in the minority, so children often lose academic knowledge during the summer. However, we now know which areas to target with homework to match the gaps. Hopefully, we’ll buck the trend and by September the children will be further along than when they did the tests.”

Powerful reporting

Mark and his staff have found the comprehensive reports, tailored for different audiences, to be particularly beneficial. “The reports are so powerful and visual, with coloured bars and graphs. They are extremely detailed and standardise children’s results. The parent report is in-depth and clearly identifies strengths and areas for development in a concise way. We’ve been really impressed by how accessible they are, and the analysis is second to none.

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“These reports are essential for children with additional needs who are working on specific targets, and form a crucial part of our meetings. In fact, these assessments have identified children who had not been picked up by the school, and helped us choose additional tests to assess particular needs further. Our safeguarding manager can access reports to check vulnerable children are making good progress, and we can see the value of interventions with our many Pupil Premium children.

“To achieve this manually would take hours and hours of work, if we could do it at all. Now, it’s all done at the click of a button.”

The reports have also been helpful when it comes to the transition of Year 6s to secondary school, particularly those who go



onto grammar schools. “I’ve sat down with Year 7 teachers and been able to show that these children are working significantly above age related expectations. In fact, everything I need for the successful transition of those children has been held within the reports. They are so good, I haven’t needed any other documentation at all.

“The next step is to include the Individual Report for Parents in their annual school reports. I’m looking forward to sharing it with them.”

Complete picture

At St Giles, the true value of the *Progress Test Series* is in the accuracy of assessing without levels. “We gain a summative picture of the attainment of children at the end of an academic year, and can identify any new learning that needs to take place.

“For example, we’ve fully planned for the new maths curriculum in terms of tracking all the objectives and children’s ongoing progress, but the *Progress Test in Maths* brings it all together. The new curriculum is very challenging, so I was pleased to see that the test was equally challenging which should give us a true reflection of attainment.

“By using the series every year, we will build a very powerful and complete picture of children’s attainment as they move through the school and this will help their achievements accelerate.”

Benefits of Progress Test Series at St Giles

- Tracks pupil progress and helps staff ensure support
- Accurately assesses children without national curriculum levels
- Builds a complete picture of a child’s attainment throughout school
- Acts as an additional filter to spot children with potential special educational needs
- Fits well with the challenging new maths curriculum
- Benchmarks knowledge and measures progress against age related expectations
- Allows teachers to directly address any gaps in knowledge
- Helps set targeted homework over the summer holidays to stop learning loss
- Enriches home/school communication.

