

DEVELOPING a NEW APPROACH to ASSESSMENT

St Bartholomew's is a small, single form entry Church of England primary school located in North Tyneside. Although the area rates as one of the most deprived in the country, families from a range of locations choose to send their children to the school because of its Christian ethos and high expectations.

Teachers at St Bartholomew's School encourage their pupils to be citizens of independent thought. It is this quality that led them to embrace the changes in assessment and curriculum in 2014, and to really focus on developing a framework that was right for their school. It is also the quality that led them to use InfoMentor, when they discovered that more traditional tracking and analysing systems failed to meet the needs of the changing educational landscape.

Richard Restall, Headteacher at St Bartholomew's C of E Primary, explains how they started on their journey:

'For a number of years we had used a detailed tracking system which allowed for analysis to be quickly accessed and acted upon, but we often felt, like many schools did, that this was distinct from the curriculum itself.

Embracing Change

'When the Government announced a new National Curriculum and that Levels were to be scrapped, we took the opportunity to consider what our curriculum would look like, how it would be planned, taught and evaluated and, of course, what assessment should be involved to move all children on appropriately.

Taking Action

'We began by planning for, and implementing the new National Curriculum ready for September 2014. Alongside this we worked on a new approach to assessment and, as we had also recently moved to a new building, there was a great deal to organise and get right. We therefore took our time, continuing to run with levels



*Richard Restall, Headteacher
St. Bartholomew's C of E Primary*

whilst trialling alternative approaches and so it wasn't until the end of Spring 2015 that we were happy with how things looked.

Bringing it all together with InfoMentor

'At this point we decided that we wanted to bring everything we had been working on into one simple system. When we came to consider InfoMentor it quickly became clear that it was tailor-made for our curriculum, as it was bespoke enough to hold our curriculum detail and it gave us the opportunity to assess what was being taught in the way we wished. We were also challenged to think differently about our approach – in a way that made all involved consider what we wanted to achieve and the best way to do it.

Getting Started

'All of our paper-based materials for Reading, Writing and Mathematics were brought together and our 'grids' and assessment principles were handed to the InfoMentor team to work on over



the Summer break. Checks were made and an October training day set aside for teachers. As we worked up to the training, issues and questions were discussed and worked on to ensure things were correct and ready to use. As the staff were already beginning to use the planning format and assessment principles, they were keen to put it all together with the promise that workload would eventually be reduced.

‘Staff quickly picked up the basics and responded positively to the system. We began slowly, first with the English curriculum, then Maths. With clear expectations, all worked well, but any new system takes time to get used to. The initial assessment data was very labour intensive but, as working patterns changed – moving away from ‘assessment weeks’ to much more formative assessment – things improved.

‘As we understood how important it was to get the implementation right, we aimed to set realistic targets for teachers to get used to the system. In the Spring term we trialled and then introduced handheld tablet devices in the classroom which were extremely useful for the teachers. Lessons and Units of Learning could be assessed in real time.

Positive Impact

‘Teachers have already seen the usefulness of knowing where the children are at and where to take them next. They regularly comment on the ease of use of system, and it is accessible to all staff, on all internet enabled devices, which means that teachers have ownership of the curriculum and their assessments are meaningful.

Sharing with Parents

‘It is hoped that, once staff are more confident with our new language and with InfoMentor, we will start to share more details with families using InfoMentor Home. We have already assembled a small group of parents to try out some of the newer language and the feedback we received following our Spring Parents’ evenings was overwhelmingly positive.

What next?

‘It is, and has been a challenge moving away from something that has been with us for many years, but everyone can see the future benefits. We also need to bear in mind the current national changes in assessment but, as our framework and InfoMentor are based on sound principles, any developments will be accommodated with little problem.’

InfoMentor

InfoMentor is a unique system, designed to support schools in delivering their own bespoke curriculum and assessment package. InfoMentor allows teachers to plan and assess against any curriculum, and our parent/pupil portal, InfoMentor Home, makes it easy to communicate ongoing progress.

If you would like to find out more about how St Bartholomew’s C of E Primary changed their approach to assessment and the new curriculum, then please contact us:

Call: 0845 680 3681

Email: enquiries@infomentor.co.uk

Visit: www.infomentor.co.uk