

Recommendations from the Working Group on the InCAS Errors of October 2009 – updated July 2011

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION TO BE TAKEN (in light of recommendation)	LEAD RESP.	PROGRESS REPORT	RAG RATING
1. Steps are taken to emphasise to parents that the primary purpose of the InCAS assessments is in contributing to diagnostic support for pupils' learning – and not for comparing pupils.	Communicate message to CASS and C2k colleagues via SEO network.	DE	Letter to SEOs/CASS/C2k issued 8 October 2010.	Green
	Message to be stressed in all relevant training provided by CCEA and CASS.	CCEA/ELBs	Message reinforced at Assessment Coordinator, Teacher and Classroom Assistants' training and at Principals' Information seminars throughout the year.	Green
	DE to issue circular or letter at start of autumn term confirming primary purpose of InCAS.	DE	Circular 2010/20 issued on 18 August 2010.	Green
	Preparation of a new parent leaflet for issue in the autumn term.	CCEA	Parent leaflet issued to schools at the beginning of September 2010. Parent leaflet will be issued to schools for parents of Year 4 pupils in August 2011 despatch.	Green
	Message to be included in the September on-line training for new teachers and Principals' seminars to emphasise this message.	CCEA	Action taken – message included in on-line training course for new teachers and to refresh existing teachers. This message will be reinforced once again during the on-line training programme in the autumn term 2011.	Green
2. The trialling of items should be separate from formal use of the	Ensure this is a clearly stated requirement from autumn 2011 as part of contract extension	CCEA/C2k	Addressed by CCEA through a Memorandum of Understanding with	Green

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assessments, perhaps being developed in collaboration with schools that volunteer to participate.	arrangements.		CEM, for the testing phase, and then in contract extension. No new items will be trialled for the remainder of the current InCAS contract.	
	Ensure also that this requirement is built into specification for new tender for computer-based diagnostic assessment.	CCEA/ C2k	A trial of the new assessment tool/s will be completed by 31 March 2012. This will be a requirement of future Providers.	Amber
	Take action to identify volunteer schools in advance of requirement for trialling.	CCEA	No new items were added to the assessment for trialling in 2011. Minor amendments to existing items were trialled in March 2011	Green
3. If the formal use of assessments must continue to incorporate trial items, this should be notified to pupils and teachers so that they know the additional items do not contribute to the assessment.	For autumn 2010, this information will be included in the September on-line training for new teachers.	CCEA	Action taken – message included in the on-line training course for new teachers and to refresh existing teachers for 2010. The 2011-12 software does not include trial items.	Green
	Additionally, seminars for principals will illustrate that new trial items will be included in the software this year (2010/11) but do not contribute to the	CCEA	Action taken – slide presentation and trainers notes included this issue. Not relevant for 2011-12 as the software does not	Green

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	assessment outcome.		include trial items.	
	CCEA will also remind teachers to inform pupils in case they get a second comprehension passage.	CCEA	Action taken – in training and information sessions and in the 2010 school preparation documents for setting up and administering InCAS. Not relevant for 2011-12 as the software does not include trial items.	Green
	Letter will issue to all school Principals (August dispatch) along with letter for parents to ensure they are informed that pupils may have to do an additional comprehension passage which will not contribute to the outcome.	CCEA	Due to the number of communication items and letters issued to Principals at the start of the school year and in light of the actual DE Working Group recommendation ‘to inform pupils and teachers’ it was felt that no separate parent communication was required, as this matter was addressed in other actions. Not relevant for 2011-12 as the software does not include an additional comprehension passage.	Green
4. Arrangements are made to test the performance of the InCAS data	Testing arrangement to be built into contract extension negotiations.	CCEA/ C2k	Testing arrangements are part of the contract extension agreed by all	Green

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processing before general release of analysed age-equivalent and standardised scores. It would not be practical or sensible to do this for all schools as the response times for analysed data would probably be seriously extended. However, it could be accomplished by collaborating with a selection of volunteering schools which provide their data early in the autumn term and contribute to the necessary checking and feedback.			parties.	
	CCEA to identify a group of schools which will sit the assessments early in September.	CCEA	Implemented in 2010. Not specified as a requirement for 2011. However, CCEA will carry out monitoring checks with schools who have downloaded their results by mid-September.	Green
	CCEA to seek the schools' permission to access their data to check feedback as an additional quality assurance procedure.	CCEA	Implemented in 2010. Not specified as a requirement for 2011. However, CCEA will carry out monitoring checks with schools who have downloaded their results by mid-September.	Green
5. The annual summer term briefings of relevant schools staff on the upcoming assessment period should include information on the measures being taken to ensure the system is robust and dependable.	Additional material will be added to the on-line training for new teachers and Principals' seminars. These sessions will be used to rebuild confidence in the system.	CCEA	Additional material has been added to the on-line training for new teachers and those existing teachers refreshing their skills. Slides, along with notes for the trainers were also added to the Principals' seminars. This was once again covered in the 2011 training.	Green
6. InCAS-related training	The training planned for 2010	CCEA	Additional material was	Green

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should increase the emphasis on the interpretation and sharing of InCAS results with parents.	<p>already carries a strong focus on interpretation and feedback to parents; however, additional material will be added along with exercises using InCAS data for illustration and interpretation purposes.</p> <p>Case study on interpretation of feedback to be available on NI Curriculum website.</p>		<p>added for all training and information sessions along with exercises using InCAS data for illustration and interpretation purposes and will be emphasised in the online training in autumn 2011.</p> <p>Case studies are available on the NI Curriculum website and extracts are being used in the face-to-face and online training sessions.</p>	
7. CCEA and DE take steps to ensure that the CEM quality control procedures are regularly and independently reviewed to reduce the potential for recurrences of errors of the types experienced in October 2009.	C2k to prepare guidelines for schools in the use of wireless computers.	C2k	In place and will again be emphasised to schools for 2011. This guidance will be mentioned in the revised InCAS manual and in the CCEA preparation letter issued to schools in the autumn despatch.	Green
	Additional clauses to be added to the new contract along with a service level agreement to be agreed by all parties and signed off.	CCEA/ C2k	Additional clauses have been added to the new contract now in place to January 2012. Agreement signed for final year of service.	Green
8. Meetings with principals are convened in the third	Slides for the Principals' seminars in September 2010 will cover	CCEA	Action taken - slides and trainers notes for principal	Green

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<p>term of 2009/2010 to set out and give assurances on the steps being taken to secure the reliability of the system in the future.</p>	<p>action taken in the autumn term to address errors and additional quality assurance procedures now in place.</p> <p>These sessions will be used to rebuild confidence in the system and to give principals an opportunity to ask any questions or express any concerns they may have.</p> <p>Sessions also will be used to reinforce the message that schools are also accountable for checking that all assessments are completed and processed.</p>		<p>sessions cover what has happened since autumn 2009 and the additional quality assurance procedures that are in place; confidence rebuilding is at the centre of these events; accountability of schools is also being addressed. This has once again been extensively covered in the 2011 training.</p>	
<p>9. All schools should be asked to give specific feedback (perhaps through the annual evaluation surveys) on the diagnostic use and performance of the assessments.</p>	<p>An opportunity for feedback on this issue will be provided in the next CCEA evaluation.</p>	<p>CCEA</p>	<p>A question was added to the 2010-11 Principal seminars evaluation and responses are included in CCEA evaluation report (November 2010). This showed that there was an increase in the usage of InCAS data within their school development plans. This has also been encouraged during the 2011 training sessions.</p>	<p>Green</p>
<p>10. Research should be</p>	<p>DE to write to NITC to ask for</p>	<p>DE</p>	<p>Letter to be issued to</p>	<p>Green</p>

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commissioned into the extent of usage of commercial practice tests by schools and parents.	views on the extent to which this is a concern for teachers.		NITC by early Autumn term.	Green
	CCEA to explore the scope to include this as a question in future evaluations.	CCEA	If required, CCEA's Research & Statistics Unit will raise this question with schools in 2011 outside the normal InCAS evaluation process.	
11. Research should be commissioned into how teachers and principals use InCAS scores for diagnostic, planning and evaluative purposes.	DE will commission ETI to undertake an evaluation of how effectively primary schools are using InCAS for diagnostic and planning purposes and to improve outcomes for pupils in literacy and numeracy. It is likely that this will take place in 2011.	ETI	ETI to undertake evaluation in 2011/12 business year.	
12. CCEA and DE seek to recoup the costs of substitution cover for CEM.	Relevant costs to be pursued and recouped from CEM.	C2k	Relevant costs recouped from CEM. Provision is made in the contract extension to cover any similar occurrence in the future.	Green
13. The legislative dimension of computer-based assessments should be reviewed.	DE will review the legislative basis for computer-based assessment after the arrangements have been in place for sufficiently long to allow for detailed evaluation of the effectiveness of this legislative provision on pupil attainment. The normal policy evaluation cycle is 5 years so this is likely to	DE	DE will prepare for an evaluation in 2015.	Green

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	be timed for 2015, after the requirement has applied to five full cohorts of pupils.			
14. The size of item banks are considerably increased in order to improve diagnostic potential and to maintain credibility by reducing both the risk of memorisation and the effectiveness of practising as a means to improving performance levels.	Requirement for reasonable increase of item banks will be built into any new contract and also in discussions with CEM.	CCEA/ C2k	Recommendation for changes to items banks are made following the post-assessment analysis by CEM. The contract extension specifies that any changes need to be approved by CCEA.	Green
15. Differential item functioning analyses are carried out for sub-groupings within the pupil population including gender, second language, special needs, socio-economic status and minority ethnic groupings.	CCEA to check with CEM if this information is readily available.	CCEA	CCEA has checked with CEM and this information is not readily available.	Green
	Consider how this might be built into specification for new tender for 2013.	CCEA	This was considered but not included in tender documentation. This recommendation may raise significant data protection issues as an assessment provider would require access to highly sensitive personal data to carry out such an analysis and this may be considered contrary to the principle of 'internal use only'.	Amber
16. InCAS consider offering	Discussion to take place with	CCEA	CCEA will be discussing	Green

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standardised scores on the basis of raw scores and that these standardised scores should be referenced to both Year cohorts and age.	CEM to reach agreement on this area to include how standardised scores are to be calculated in future.		this with supplier/s once decisions are taken on the new assessment Provider/s.	
17. CCEA and CEM agree a policy on standardisation as soon as possible.	Policy to be formally agreed between CCEA and CEM re frequency of future standardisation.	CCEA	InCAS was restandardised for 2010. A standardisation analysis was carried out again on the 2010 cohort and General maths has now been restandardised for the autumn 2011 assessment. This is part of the analysis conducted by CEM at the end of the annual assessment period.. This is part of the analysis conducted by CEM at the end of the annual assessment period.	Green
18. CEM institute appropriate modifications to ensure that information on the various types of inappropriate access to and usage of InCAS is available and traceable.	Explore with CEM the introduction of sufficient mechanisms in their system to identify schools where pupils are re-sitting assessments.	CCEA	Discussions have taken place with CEM to identify what mechanisms to be put in place to identify these schools.	Green
	Explore with CEM the mechanisms in place to identify who has downloaded data and	CCEA	This has been explored between CEM and CCEA; however, it will	Green

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	when.		not be available for 2011 assessments.	
19. A review of ICT resources for InCAS administration is carried out to identify schools needing support.	DE to ask C2k, working in partnership with CCEA, to assess the adequacy of ICT resources in the context of the statutory requirements for InCAS and bearing in mind the place of ICT as a cross-curricular skill and the planned introduction of the new Levels of Progression.	DE/C2k	The view of C2k is that adequate resources are in place in schools to allow them to complete their statutory assessment obligations as evidenced by the experience in 2009/10.	Green

Recommendations 4, 7 and 12 and associated actions are linked to the recommendations of the KPMG Report.