

Piloting Key Stage 3 Standard Assessment Tests: A Department approach

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Our experience of doing the National Curriculum Technology Pilot project began with a slight smile from Gordon Rees, the Headteacher, as he said to me one fateful morning 'I thought it would be good experience to take part in the tests. Don't you think so Peter?' 'Absolutely' I said. It's all designed to form part of the departments normal teaching lessons anyway. How wrong that was but an experience certainly.

The planning and implementation of the Technology Pilot SAT's was clearly linked to the materials designed and produced by the conducting agency based at Middlesex University. Before our response and conclusions can be outlined a brief introduction to the departments organisation is necessary. Any design and technology teacher reading this will appreciate the time needed to plan and deliver well managed and structured courses for pupils undertaking designing, making and evaluating activity.

The lower school foundation course was restructured three years ago, to bring the work in line with the National Curriculum. So the year nine following the Pilot work had the same structure and assessment methods as years 7 and 8.

The pupils are taught in complete mixed ability, half yearly bands of approximately 110 with five members of staff. The work is delivered through a series of themes and all students have a half day per week in the special areas.

There are five staff at any one time and each theme lasts for eight weeks with five themes in the year.

The structure of the courses for years 7-9 can be seen from the table below which shows the organisation for year 9. The long Task has been programmed in but it is subject to change in the light of any changes that may have to be made to the structure and timing of the Statutory SAT's for 1993. What's new about adapting to change you all ask!

The work for each teaching group is well structured by the Technology team and a great deal of hard work went into mapping existing good practice within the department. Identifying what the department does well before matching them with the Programmes of Study (PoS) for Technology. The assessment recording methods for the SoA's and AT's were developed to suit the departments method of working and an example of the records are shown below.

Further reference to teacher assessment and recording will be made later in the article but what is vital for any department doing the Tests next year is to have good, clear assessment records. Originally the department tried to cross-reference the PoS with the AT's and give a level statement for an attainment target for each part of the PoS covered during a project ...Wrong! This proved impossible and time consuming so the progression through the PoS are recorded separately from the AT's. (see Tables 2 and 3)

When a new theme starts all the pupils come together for a delivery by either an individual teacher or a team of teachers. The pupils are then directed to the specialist areas and return for displays and evaluations in eight weeks time. All the work in all the areas operate the same teaching philosophy giving designing, making and evaluating experience to the pupils.

Now that the structure of the existing teaching methods has been outlined the approach to the National Pilot will be understood more clearly and how the department was equipped to take the work on board.

The Pilot consists of two main parts

1. *The Long Task*

Started on the 9th March and finishing on the 29th May.

2. *The Short Test*

A1 ½ hour pencil and paper test based upon the work undertaken in the Long Task taken on the 10th June.

Technology Theme	Starting Dates	Expressive Arts Theme
T1 Time	Thursday 3rd September	E1 Conflict
T2 Product Design	Monday 2nd November	E2 Distortion
T3 Occupations/Trades	Tuesday 6th January	E3 Diary
T4 KS3 Long Task	Monday 8th March	E4 Historical
T5 Production Techniques	14th June or 17th May	E5 Protest

Technology and Expressive Arts Group Rotation and Themes: Year 9 1992/93

1. *The Long Task*

This was based upon the Theme of Batch Production within the context of the School — a Charity Fair. The conducting agency, Middlesex University, clearly outlined the Long Task and specified the PoS that the Test on 10th June would be based upon. The departments response was to substitute the existing last two themes for year 9 with Batch Production.

The planning by the department focused on the following areas:

A. *Teacher Assessment and Levels*

The department knew that the Long Task would have to be assessed according to a level against all four Attainment Targets for D&T Capability. The work was differentiated into three level bands, L1-4, L3-7, L6-10, as set out on colour coded level cards.

When planning the Long Task work it was stated that it should result in levels of performance for all AT's 1-4 but after the start of the Project the Secretary of State decided that for 1993 the Long Task would assess AT's 2 and 3. The Short Test would assess AT's 1 and 4. However, being used to changes in the National Curriculum, it came as little surprise when Middlesex notified the department and asked us to continue to provide assessment for all four AT's for the Long Task. The Test in June would address AT's 1 and 4.

■ **Planning**

The Long Task itself consisted of a choice of activities all related to a common theme and the way in which one task was chosen or allocated was left to the department. The staff team decided that the pupils would go to the normal teacher and together decide what projects to do. It was decided by the team that the following tasks would be attempted.

Design and Technology	Task 2 and 4 — side show game
Home Economics	Task 1 — Novel snacks
Rural Science	Task 2 — pocket sized product
Graphics	Task 3 — Promotional material

The department brainstormed a range of possible projects to produce a bank of suggestions for staff to discuss with pupils. All the suggestions were connected to the theme of

Batch Production and the context of the Charity Fair.

It was decided that the pupils would be directed to normal teaching groups referred to earlier. Some resistance was expected, however, not one pupil showed any kind of objections to the organisation.

The team also decided to leave the use of the level cards to individual group teachers deciding when to give them to pupils, and this varied from group to group. Some groups were told early on in the Long Task what level they were working towards but it was in no way fixed throughout the work. Some teachers waited to see the work develop and get to know the pupils before allocating a level. All that was important was that pupils knew what level Test paper they would take on 10th June, but they all had open access to the colour coded Theme sheet. This enabled the pupils, in discussion with the teacher, to know what was required from each level band.

■ **The Folder**

All pupils were given a new folder with coloured separators identifying the main eight sections of the folder. The eight sections were taken from the central spine of the Theme sheets which was common to all three level bands. The instructions from Middlesex were that pupils should provide evidence of work from all eight sections.

In each section pupils were given guidance, in pupil language, on what to include. The process was by no means linear and pupils work moved about from section to section.

Sections

1. Investigation
2. Possible things to design
3. Design brief
4. Design ideas
5. Design improvements
6. Resources
7. Plan for making my design
8. Evaluation

Pupils working at higher levels were expected to provide evidence with greater variety and depth for each section.

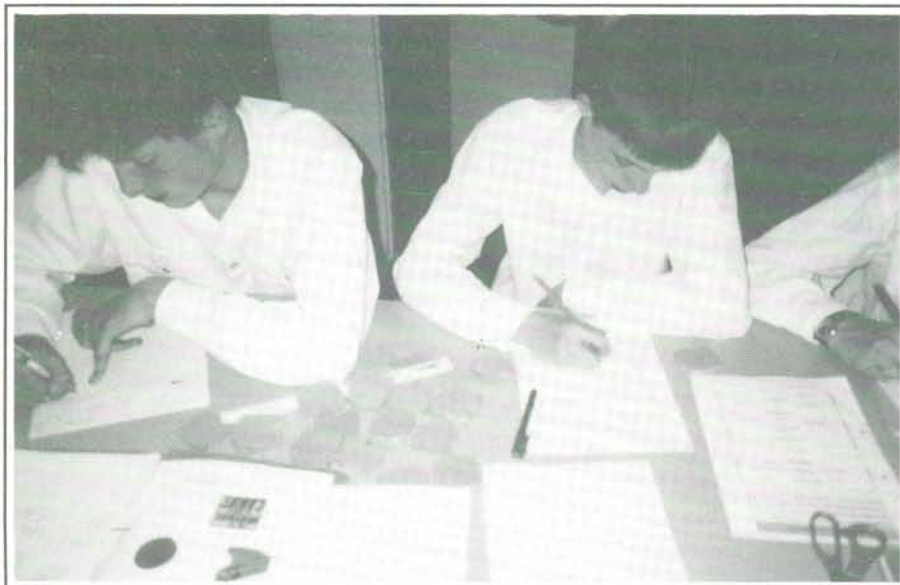
Pupils were encouraged but not forced to take their folders home to work on and many did. Some students gave hours of their time to produce an outstanding folder of work. Shown below are photographs of pupils projects.

■ The Project

The projects produced demonstrated a clear commitment from the pupils and they should be congratulated for their time and effort. There were many different projects made, the list below gives a flavour of the range.

Jewellery	Corn Dollies	
Money Boxes	Hats	Badges
Small hand games	Tee Shirts	Hair Grips & ties
Snacks	Pencil Holder	Give away leaflets
Pizza's	Watch Stand	Packaging in boxes
Skittle Games	Plastic Gnomes	Book Marks

It is important to note at this point the inclusion of Rural Science within the department structure. The school and pupils enjoy the facilities of one of the best Rural Science departments in the country. The teaching rooms provide a rich educational experience for children and pupils actively experience other cultures and past technologies. They produce work ranging from corn dollies to thatching, pole lathe turning to coracle making. The enthusiasm and expertise of the teacher is clearly portrayed in the attitude of pupils and the standard of their work.



Throughout the making of the project staff had to maintain a reference to the stated PoS to make sure they were being covered. The management of over 200 pupils projects, all trying to finish a folder and a product, was unbelievable.

At the time when teachers were trying to display, mark and moderate year 11 course work as well. This nearly resulted in some premature retirements — all part of the normal teaching load! — But we made it.

■ The Test — 10th June

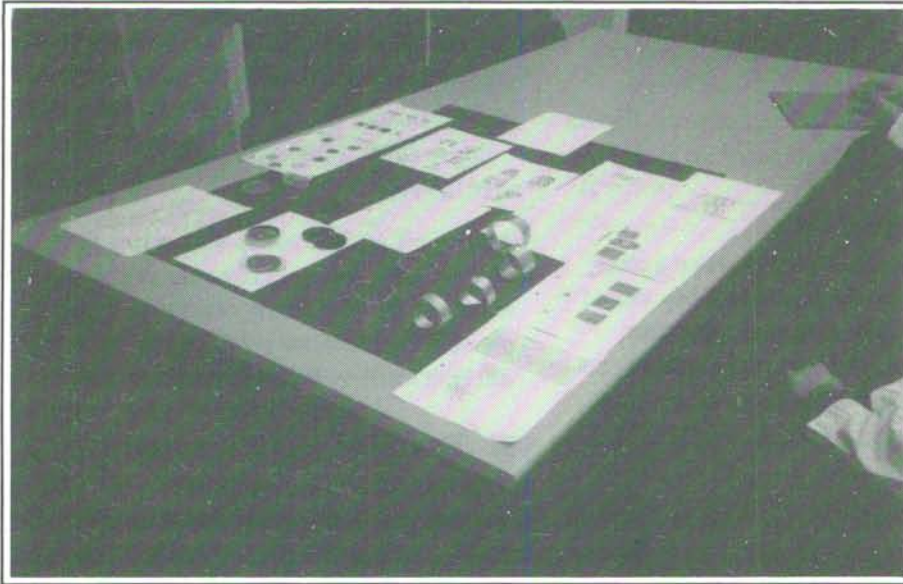
If by now there is any sympathy for the teachers, give a thought to the pupils. At Danetre all year 9 were doing science, maths, IT and D&T SAT's all in one week. Somebody said that the pupils should be doing English as well — that would sort them out!

By the beginning of May all pupils knew what level of test they would be doing and were panicking about finishing the Long Task. On the 21st May two representatives attended the INSET organised by Middlesex University and this was the first time we had seen the Test Papers and marking procedures. At first sight it looked ominous but during the day it became easier to understand and the management of it seemed less daunting. Perhaps only half the team would resign!

Returning to school the following day all the technology team were given the materials for light reading over the following weeks halfterm holiday. This was followed by two after school training sessions to prepare for the marking of the tests and the recording. The following work had to be done for each pupil.

1. Fill out a OMR Sheet
2. State Special Needs provision
3. Task taken and Test paper
4. Time taken
5. Teacher Assessment
6. Long Task Assessment in levels for AT's 1-4
7. Marks for the Test — Yes or No
8. General details

One thing that was clear was that some of the level entries for pupils had to change and mainly to a lower level. The department also



gave some detailed but 'General Advice' about what to expect on the Test Papers.

All the Team had a very comprehensive marking scheme with good clear examples of questions and possible answers produced by Middlesex University. The department had a distance learning package which helped a great deal in understanding what to look for in pupils answers.

The marking scheme allowed for a Yes or No and all sections of the question had to be correct to score a Yes. This meant that 80% of a question could be right but a No would be entered if the last 20% was wrong. It was time consuming at the beginning of the marking but it did get easier, with Test 3 (ie. level 6-10) taking the longest to mark.

The department did get through the marking and recording on time but it was hard going for staff and pupils. The fact that the Test took place at the same time as external Year 11 examinations, caused added complications. The planning and management of the Test itself to get 10 design groups with 22 pupils in each into separate rooms, organise non-specialised teachers to hand out three different question papers. — It was fun!

■ Conclusions

1. *Short Test*

- Remember that the format could change dramatically for '93.
- The tests were presented with difficult carrier language so the English could be a problem for some pupils.
- The pupils need prior training. Organise a mock if possible.
- The material provided by Middlesex was impressive.
- Prepare for some time commitment in the department.
- Good T.A. records are important. Get the level of entry correct.
- Make sure Managers in the school are involved in the planning and management of the SAT's.

2. *Long Task*

- It needs managing and careful planning. Earlier the better.
- Make sure the structure is there so that all pupils and staff know what they are doing.
- There is a cost implication. Photographs and various extras cost the department over £300.
- Choose method of working area, materials and specialism carefully. Danetre directed pupils but option choices may be preferred.
- Guidance sheets are essential and well worth the effort before hand.
- Pupils and staff need constant support and have all material available. Display reference sheets around the rooms in the department using language pupils understand.