

## **PRESS RELEASE Young children as guinea pigs, the Reception Baseline Assessment Framework**

### [Young children as guinea pigs TACTYC STOP PRESS](#)

Read the latest TACTYC paper, entitled '[Young children as guinea pigs: the Reception Baseline Assessment Framework](#)'. This paper criticises the government's planned national pilot of reception class baseline testing, released by the Standards and Testing Agency (STA). Education experts from TACTYC state that the STA framework fails to address the substantive problems with baseline assessment that have been repeatedly identified by education experts, teachers and parents. Equally, the new information about the content and administration of the test raises additional concerns.

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Schools are being asked to join the next stage of developing a test of 4-year-olds in order to judge schools seven years later, in a move that has been slammed in a paper issued today by education experts from TACTYC. Chair Dr Jan Georgeson says "young children will be used as unwitting subjects in an experiment which is bound to fail".

The TACTYC paper responds to details of the government's planned national pilot of reception class baseline testing released by the Standards and Testing Agency (STA). It says the STA framework fails to address the substantive problems with baseline assessment that have been repeatedly identified by education experts, teachers and parents. "The new information about the content and administration of the test shows clearly that it is not fit for purpose, and will be detrimental to children, teachers and schools," says Dr Georgeson.

"Children starting school will be confronted with a one-to-one test on their knowledge of maths and literacy, for the sole purpose of producing data to judge schools seven years later," says Dr Georgeson. "Teachers have much better ways of finding out about the children in order to help them learn. This will simply take them away from that important job in the early weeks and instead make teachers waste hours in creating dodgy data that won't give a reliable picture of each child and won't predict how children will perform on tests years later."

The TACTYC paper 'Young children as guinea pigs: the Reception Baseline Assessment Framework', criticises the government's plan to 'black box' the test results so that schools and parents will not be told scores for individual children (which will be held in the national pupil database). According to TACTYC, this raises 'serious questions regarding the rights of parents to the data held on their child – and to give permission for the data to be generated in the first place. This is data produced and held without parental consent or oversight, regarding children who are not even yet of statutory school age.'

TACTYC says STA plans not to share results with schools are contradicted by giving teachers a 'narrative summary' of each child. This risks labelling children and beginning a cycle of low expectations and entrenching disadvantage for some children.

TACTYC accuses the government of deciding 'to count what is easily counted, but not what actually counts' by dropping self-regulation from the test. It describes self-regulation as a 'significant factor in children's learning and a strong predictor of progress', while pointing out that critics had predicted that self-regulation could not be measured in such a brief test situation.

TACTYC's paper criticises:

- closed assessment tasks presented in an unfamiliar and structured situation, with minimal handling of a few materials which will not enable children to show what they know and understand
- a 'routing mechanism' which will automatically stop asking questions in an area if the child gives incorrect responses, which wrongly assumes gaining knowledge is predictably progressive and that children learn in a linear way
- a high proportion of abstract tasks, rather than the concrete experiences which are appropriate for children of this age

- The test being conducted solely in English and without age adjustment of scores, which will disadvantage some groups of children including children in the early stages of learning English, children with special educational needs, and summer-born children.

**For further information contact**

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