5-14 Mathematics — Number, Money and Measurement, Level D

Introduction

Six primary schools and one secondary school took part in an online assessment pilot involving the automatic online marking of pupils' responses at level D in the Mathematics strand 'Number, Money and Measurement.'

Some of the problems and advantages of online assessment at this level were noted by the teachers and pupils involved in the pilot:

Teachers

- There were some problems in extracting children from class to use the computers in a separate room. This was partly to do with this being a pilot project, and would not arise if online assessment was embedded in the way the school delivers the curriculum.
- There were frequent problems in accessing the Internet, although with the coming of broadband this would ease in the future.
- The time it took to register children was an issue in one school. However, this would reduce as everyone became familiar with the system.
- All the teachers involved thought that doing more assessment online would be practical/desirable — at more levels and/or in different subjects.
- Being able to see at a glance how the children were doing was an advantage.
- Children still needed to use paper and pencil to do the arithmetic. This was because the computer could not capture the way the children did their calculations.
- The importance of child-friendly feedback was stressed — sometimes the children got frustrated when they got something wrong and the computer didn't say how to do it right.

Children

- The great majority of the children enjoyed doing the online assessment, and also believed that their classmates enjoyed the work.
- The children appreciated the fact that when they got a question wrong they would get another chance with a question covering the same area.
- The children also found the colour and action in some of the questions to be interesting, saying that the pictures helped them to understand what the questions were getting at.
- The children were enthusiastic about online assessment and found the work stimulating. They used it to identify their own weaknesses in a way which allowed them to plan their own learning and development needs.