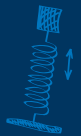


# Year 6: a better way.

SATs Springboard  
Impact Report 23/24



Grammar



# What is SATs Springboard?



SATs Springboard is the digital solution that replaces the old-school Year 6 grind of photocopying past papers, marking, weekends lost to kitchen-table question-level-analysis, and hunting the internet for materials late into the night. It instantly identifies gaps and delivers ready-to-use online resources direct to pupils, allowing teachers to easily tailor support for every pupil - no more all-nighters, just focused teaching!

*“A different, exciting, innovative way to do SATs.”*  
Y6 teacher

Suitable for earlier in Year 6

DIAGNOSTIC 1

Springboard is built around 12 maths and 12 English diagnostic assessments that dynamically create a revision roadmap for the year.



Suitable for when all Year 6 content has been taught

DIAGNOSTIC 12

More Year 6 content gradually introduced

Diagnostics start by **checking the foundational objectives, weaving in more Year 6 content** as pupils progress.

As more content has been taught in class, the **diagnostics reflect the year group and content domain weighting of the SATs papers** themselves.

During each diagnostic, teachers are provided with **instant Question-Level Analysis** to identify learning gaps at both a **whole-class and individual level**.

Springboard then dives into the LbQ resource library to recommend **priority mastery and practice resources** to address the most important gaps.

# SATs Springboard was launched in September 2023.

730 classes and 22,000 children used it.

We surveyed their teachers, and these were the results.\*

*“Our class averages are rising at 5% a week.”*

# 98%

agreed that their pupils made **greater academic progress** than they would have done otherwise.

*“Children were actually quite excited, looking forward to the SATs.”*

# 92%

agreed that using SATs Springboard **reduced pupil anxiety.**

(The other 8% didn't believe their pupils suffered from anxiety anyway.)



*“Provided relief from the relentless pace of year 6.”*

# 97%

agreed that SATs Springboard **positively impacted their wellbeing.**

*“We've had a better grip on year 6 than ever before, with less workload.”*

# 100%

agreed that SATs Springboard **reduced their workload.**

\* SATs impact survey May/June 2024 - 57 Springboard users interviewed.

# What are the challenges facing Year 6?

All schools want their children to succeed.

It should be acknowledged that there are multiple measures of success including:

- academic achievement
- positive attitudes to learning and challenge
- children's well-being and anxiety
- children's holistic preparedness for secondary school

Balancing these different outcomes is challenging, especially within the demanding context of Year 6.



In our work with schools, the following five challenges are frequently identified by Year 6 teachers in preparing the children for the Key Stage 2 SATs.

## 1. Time Pressure

'Ramping up' to SATs, especially after Christmas.



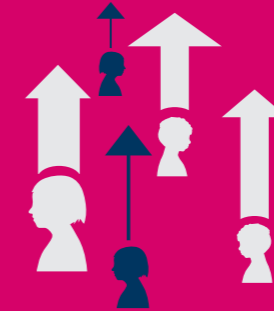
## 2. Coverage

Covering the Year 6 curriculum whilst also addressing children's learning gaps from previous year-groups.



## 3. Streaming

Ability-grouping, without creating glass ceilings.



## 4. Anxiety

The impact of testing on children's anxiety and wellbeing.



## 5. Workload

Hidden burdens and the effect on Year 6 teachers' well-being.



**There is a better way.**

In this impact report, we'll look at each of these challenges and provide new evidence for how SATs Springboard can make a big difference.



## Challenge 1:

# Time Pressure

‘Ramping up’ to SATs, especially after Christmas.



**It will come as no surprise that a common concern raised by Year 6 teachers was time.**

In many schools we’ve spoken to, SATs begins when summer ends. Other surveys such as More than a Score [6] see the largest number of schools take the decision to begin SATs preparation after Christmas, with a full term before the exams. Either way this puts enormous pressure on Spring Term and many teachers expressed unease with the extent to which every morning’s teaching was then consumed by SATs preparation. The closer it got to May, the less time was devoted to the ‘wider’ curriculum in order to maximise the time given to SATs preparation - and it was still not enough.

Teachers are not alone in feeling this concern. During the academic year 2023-24, the UCL Institute of Education surveyed [7] over 1200 Year 6 teachers and school leaders, asking about SATs preparation in their schools and the impact of this on the school’s staff and children.

20% of the teachers surveyed reported that they were already doing more than 3 hours of explicit SATs preparation each week as early in the school year as December. By March, this had increased to 47% and to 60% by April. Conversely, just 15% of the survey’s participants said they were not doing SATs preparation in December. This fell to 5% in April.

The need to prepare the children for SATs has a profound impact upon their experience of Year 6. It shapes both the curriculum and how teaching is delivered, affecting both teachers and children.

## Challenge 2:

# Coverage

Covering the Year 6 curriculum whilst also addressing children’s learning gaps from previous year groups.

Another cause of this relentless focus on SATs preparation and the subsequent ‘curriculum-narrowing’ experienced in many Year 6 classes is the need to teach the entire Year 6 curriculum in such a limited period of time.

In addition, teachers must also address the gaps in knowledge the children might have from earlier year groups. This is only exacerbated by the impact of the disruption to children’s education caused by the Covid-19 pandemic which can still be felt.

Given that Year 6 teachers have, in effect, only two terms to teach almost all of the Year 6 curriculum, how can they reasonably be expected to identify and address the gaps in children’s prior knowledge – especially as these gaps are likely to be different for each individual child?



[6] More Than A Score, March 2019.

[7] Quick L., UCL Institute of Education (2024), The SATs Effect. (Published by More Than A Score)

# How SATs Springboard addresses time pressure and coverage

We need to ensure our children's learning is as efficient as possible.

*"It did exactly what we wanted it to do. It provided that regular analysis of where the children were and what we needed to teach... both at the whole-class level and at the individual level as well."*

*"It's the analysis of individual pupils' needs ... You're never going to have two children who have the exact same weaknesses and the exact same gaps in the curriculum, so the fact that I was able to identify every single gap and set it as an independent study ... that was absolutely spot on."*

*"We found that many of our gaps were from Years 3 and 4 because of Covid. ... That's LbQ in a nutshell, isn't it? Find the gaps so you can do something about them."*

(Y6 Teachers)

Where children have gaps in their prior learning from earlier year groups, SATs Springboard identifies these with a precision and speed that it is not practically possible for a teacher to replicate.

Teachers participating in our survey highlighted how SATs Springboard enabled them to pinpoint different gaps for individual children. This allows them to target these on an individual basis rather than re-teaching the entire unit to the whole class.

What previously took a week to plug gaps in the children's knowledge could now be accomplished in a day, reducing the coverage pressure which contributes to the 'ramping up' to SATs, especially in the Spring Term.

Similarly, SATs Springboard identifies strengths the class and children already have in the Year 6 curriculum content. This allows teachers to streamline their delivery and save time by focusing on what matters most.

# 98%

of SATs Springboard users said that their children made greater academic progress than they would have done without it.

*"The analysis SATs Springboard does, I couldn't do anything near this by myself, it's just done!"*

(Y6 Teacher survey participant)

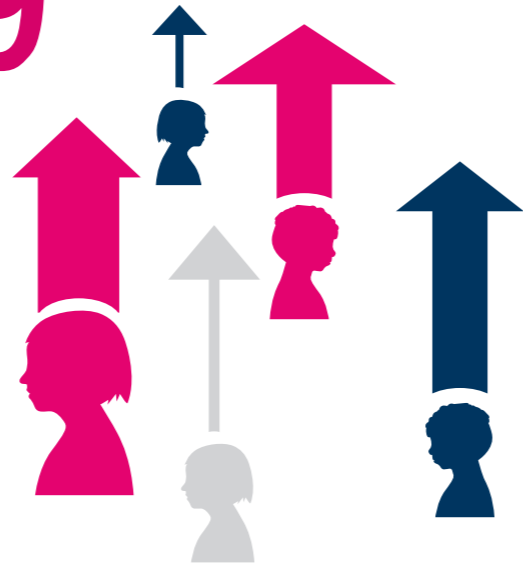


### Challenge 3:

# Streaming

The impact of testing on children's anxiety and wellbeing.

**“Education should be about opening doors, not closing them. When we group children by ability, we risk limiting opportunities for some while others soar ahead, creating unnecessary divides.” [10]**



Ability-grouping and streaming are contentious issues in primary education. Proponents argue that it ensures that teaching is tailored to the ability level of different groups of pupils within a class. In this way, higher-attaining pupils can be more effectively challenged, whilst lower-attaining pupils can be provided with the content and more focused support which best suits their needs. How else can teachers be expected to provide for the attainment range within their classes in practice?

However, ability-grouping and streaming risk creating 'glass ceilings' in our classrooms. Pupils in 'lower' groups may well experience reduced self-esteem and lower expectations, both from their teachers and themselves. As Dame Alison Peacock argues, "Children placed in 'lower' groups may internalise a sense of failure, which can damage their confidence and limit their belief in what they can achieve." [11] For some children, it is possible that low attainment can become a 'self-fulfilling prophecy'.

Pupils in 'lower' ability groups are also unlikely to be exposed to the same level of challenge as others in their class, limiting their learning opportunities and potential for growth. For example, if a child's 'daily educational diet' is pitched below the level of the age-related expectations, how can we reasonably expect them to 'catch-up' and achieve the expected standard?

In his research on setting and streaming within the 'Visible Learning' series, Professor John Hattie suggests that its overall impact on pupil achievement is minimal (or, especially when equity outcomes are considered negative). Given the potential negative impacts on children's expectations and self-esteem outlined above, Hattie asks, "Why do we persist ... ? Who benefits? Not the students." [12]

Research by Towers (et al) [13] suggests that SATs encourage schools to group by ability more, especially in Years 5 and 6.

## Again, might there be a better way?

[10] This quote has been commonly attributed to Dame Alison Peacock. However, the specific source of this exact quote is not widely documented in readily accessible public materials or published works. [11] Peacock A, Dame (2016), Assessment for Learning without Limits.

[12] Hattie J, (2023), Visible Learning: The Sequel. [13] Towers, E., Taylor, B., Tereshchenko, A., & Mazenod, A. (2019). 'The reality is complex': teachers' and school leaders' accounts and justifications of grouping practices in the English key stage 2 classroom.

## How SATs Springboard addresses streaming

**We need to ensure we don't create unnecessary divides through ability grouping.**

Learning by Questions and the SATs Springboard remove the need for teachers to make assumptions about what the children can do and where they might need support both before and during the lesson. It provides unparalleled, instantaneous Assessment for Learning for the teacher, for every child in the class.

With this support, it becomes possible to more easily deliver the inclusive model of teaching proposed by educationalists such as Dame Alison Peacock above.

Groupings don't have to be determined before the start of the lesson, as a more dynamic approach can be taken in response to children's progress within the lesson. In this way, grouping doesn't have to become limiting.

Also, more children [14] can access the same task as their peers, as the teacher will know immediately which children within the class need help at each stage of the lesson. This allows the teacher to provide the in-the-moment support and feedback which we know has the biggest impact on children's learning.

*“I can meet all their different needs with one click of a button, and I can meet them in a way that's just the right level of challenge for them, so it's really supporting the pupils massively.”*

*(Y6 Teacher)*

*“We were no longer singling out groups of children. Children know which 'group' they're in, which impacts negatively on their self-esteem. We stopped doing that this year, as we can see through LbQ's Assessment for Learning info which children need help - so we don't need to 'single these children out'.”*

*(Y6 Teacher)*



[14] Whilst in an ideal world, this sentence would read "all children ...", it is necessary to recognise that there are likely to be children, for example those with acute SEND, for whom work pitched at the age-related level may not be a fair expectation.



## Challenge 4:

# Anxiety

The impact of testing on children's anxiety and wellbeing.



In our survey, nearly every Year 6 teacher highlighted their efforts to minimise the anxiety their students faced while preparing for the SATs. These teachers were acutely aware of the potential negative impact that SATs could have on their children's confidence, enjoyment of learning, and overall wellbeing and were very concerned to mitigate against this.

Their comments reflect the prevailing concern that the SATs have a negative impact on many children's wellbeing. In a 2017 survey of primary school headteachers for The Key [15], 80% reported that pupils in their school had experienced an increase in stress, anxiety and panic attacks in the last two years, while 76% had seen an increase in their pupils' fear of academic failure.

There has also long been concern that the 'high stakes' of the SATs risks them having a disproportionate impact on schools serving more deprived catchments. Given that, nationally, children from disadvantaged backgrounds are more at risk of lower attainment than their peers, it is arguable that schools with a higher proportion of such pupils face greater challenges in meeting national attainment targets.

UCL's research found that teachers and school leaders in more deprived catchments reported higher levels of SATs preparation activities, along with increased disengagement and anxiety among students during the autumn and spring terms [16]. Although the differences between schools levelled out in the final weeks before the SATs, this evidence suggests that the impact of the SATs is felt more acutely in schools facing greater challenges.

## How SATs Springboard addresses the impact of testing on children's anxiety and wellbeing.

**We need to minimise the anxiety pupils face when preparing for SATs.**

Our survey highlighted the positive impact of SATs Springboard on reducing children's anxiety in their preparation for the SATs.

**92% of respondents reported a substantial reduction in their pupils' anxiety levels through the use of SATs Springboard.**

(The remaining 8% indicated that the culture within their schools already emphasised reducing pupils' anxiety, and that Springboard complemented this approach well.) Participants in the survey also emphasised that Springboard was enjoyable, motivational and built the children's confidence.

A key factor in achieving this reduction in children's anxiety is that they genuinely enjoy using LbQ, leading to higher engagement levels, even though the SATs Springboard questions closely mirror those found in the actual SATs tests.

*"It was actually very motivational. Every time I walked into the class, they were just loving it, they really enjoyed it."*  
(Headteacher)

The SATs Springboard assessments are carefully designed to replicate the year-group and content domain structure of the tests. They also include the full range of SATs-style questions.

Therefore, the Springboards provide thorough preparation for the tests, but do so in a way which is non-threatening, making SATs preparation a less stressful experience for the children.

*"They really, really enjoyed it. In the last few weeks of the run up to SATs, they were getting a diet literally of English and maths and the motivation stayed high because we were delivering the English and maths using LbQ for so much of it."*

(Y6 Teacher)

The early SATs Springboard assessments are designed to be delivered in the Autumn Term. Whilst still replicating the content domain weightings of the SATs, they only include content from Years 3 to 5. In this way, teachers can gain the same level of insight into the cohort's learning needs whilst drastically reducing the risk of the test damaging children's confidence and raising their anxiety.

Responses from the children tell us that they recognise the value of the immediate feedback LbQ gives them after each question. Part of the reason that they engage so positively with it is because they understand how it helps them to make progress. This, too, helps to promote the children's confidence and empowers their sense of 'ownership' of their learning, helping to reduce their anxiety further.

*"It's not just about the academic results. The children were definitely better able to work independently, pushing themselves more as a result of using LbQ."*

(Y6 Teacher)



## Challenge 5:

# Workload



### Hidden burdens and the effect on Year 6 teachers' wellbeing.

There can be little doubt that SATs significantly increase the workload for Year 6 teachers. The process of preparing pupils for SATs – creating, preparing and marking practice tests and SATs-focused activities; planning lessons to address identified misconceptions; and providing targeted interventions – exacts a high cost in terms of teachers' time and effort. Whilst these tasks are essential to effectively prepare our pupils for the SATs, they add substantially to a Year 6 teacher's workload.

Many Year 6 teachers feel under pressure to ensure their students achieve good SATs results. Alongside this pressure, Year 6 teachers can also feel that they bear the responsibility of managing the anxiety that their pupils may experience as they prepare for the tests. In severe cases, these factors can lead to job dissatisfaction and even burnout, exacerbating the overall impact of SATs on schools.

*"You do feel guilty because you go into teaching to support every child to make progress in every lesson."*

*I'd have to complete a QLA and it would take ages, I'd end up doing it at home on the kitchen table. No sooner had we filled those gaps, then we were back at the beginning again.*

*It was stressful and exhausting.. The children were doing SATs paper after SATs paper after SATs paper...It wasn't good for them, or us as practitioners."*

*Year 6 Teacher and Deputy Head.*



## How SATs Springboard addresses the workload burden on educators of Year 6

### We need to utilise the power of technology to significantly reduce teacher workload.

Much of the additional teacher workload can be drastically reduced through the use of SATs Springboard.

The feedback from our survey that SATs Springboard helps to reduce teachers' workload could not have been stronger. 100% of respondents agreed that their workload had been reduced. In response to a follow-up question regarding whether this workload benefit had also improved their wellbeing, 97% agreed or strongly agreed.

*"It was a massive, massive decrease in workload. In terms of analysis, in terms of actual marking, assessment, feedback, in terms of everything really. ... It was very, very good for teacher workload."*

*(Y6 Teacher)*

*"We talked throughout the year about the workload being different. What you're doing is spending that time on analysis rather than marking, which feels much more purposeful because you're then, from that analysis, able to target more clearly. It does reduce workload, but it doesn't take it away and nor should it; it allows you to work more efficiently."* (Y6 Teacher)

# 100%

of respondents agreed that their workload had been reduced.



# Conclusion

The feedback from our survey with the school leaders and teachers who had used SATs Springboard resources has provided evidence that, used well, it will improve pupil outcomes; reduce the anxiety children experience in the build-up to SATs; whilst also dramatically reducing teacher workload.

*"We've got a new teacher coming into the Year 6 team next year and I've said, 'Look, you know it's hard work and it is really stressful, but LBQ has been a lifesaver this year. It really has'."*

*(Y6 Teacher)*



A BETTER WAY

Being a part of this better way, means that your teachers and pupils can do more than survive Year 6.

They can thrive in it.



*"Tackling pupil anxiety, reducing teacher workload and improving outcomes might seem like an unlikely combination - too good to be true.*

*However, a random sample of teachers unanimously reported that harnessing the power of technology and putting LbQ to work in their classrooms did just that."*

**Sir Kevan Collins,**

Special Advisor to DfE, Executive Vice Chair of LbQ,  
Former Chair EEF.



TAKE ME TO SATs  
SPRINGBOARD

Grammar

Learning by Questions Ltd,  
Bowland House, Philips Road,  
Whitebirk Industrial Estate,  
Blackburn, Lancashire,  
UK BB1 5NA


T: +44 (0)1254 688060  
E: info@lbq.org

### Written by Rob Blanchet

Rob started as a Year 6 teacher in Lincolnshire and Trafford, before becoming a Deputy Headteacher in Warrington. Rob has twelve years' experience as a Headteacher at three schools. During this time he was introduced to Learning by Questions, a platform which echoes his passion to make a difference for children in challenging circumstances.

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