



 Pathways

Revised
and updated
2017

A Guide to Assessment

Tools and support for primary
schools in England

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Foreword author

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Who is this guide for?

This guide is for primary teachers, but will be of particular interest to Senior Leadership Teams (SLTs), including headteachers and middle leaders with responsibility for school assessment arrangements, tracking progress and accountability measures.

Acknowledgements

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Foreword

Trusting ourselves; enjoying the freedom

The removal of National Curriculum levels provides an opportunity the profession cannot afford to miss. We need to build teachers' confidence in developing their own approaches to assessment that are focused on the needs of their pupils, tailored to the school's curriculum and support really effective teaching.

While moving away from a system of assessment that has been so conditioned by levels will be challenging, it is a chance for all of us to refocus attention on sound classroom practice. High-quality formative assessment is at the very heart of good teaching and is the key to raising standards. It should enrich learning and pupil motivation, enable teachers to grow professionally and make better use of their time, knowledge and skills.

As with the adage, "look after the pennies and the pounds will look after themselves", if teachers look after formative assessment, the summative assessment should look after itself. Effective formative assessment allows teachers to tailor their assessments to the underpinning knowledge and skills being taught. The best assessment is often about the discourse that takes

place in the classroom between teacher and pupils. It is a highly effective way for teachers to identify what pupils know, where gaps or misconceptions lie and how they should plan future teaching accordingly. Importantly, it also enables teachers to continually assess the effectiveness of their own teaching.

Although developing new approaches to assessment may initially increase the demands on schools, assessment without levels offers the potential for more appropriate, but less burdensome, assessment and reporting arrangements. It is essential that as leaders we support teaching staff with the transition to pastures new rather than to try to reinvent the old system. It is never easy to change a system, especially when we have lived with levels for such a long time, but we must resist the temptation to reinvent levels by turning the National Curriculum 2014 programmes of study into attainment targets. Instead we need to focus on high-quality formative assessment, confident that in doing so pupils will be more than adequately prepared to meet the challenges of summative tests.



Overview of assessment in schools

Assessment without levels

The first National Curriculum was introduced into English schools in 1988. Until 2015, it was accompanied by a scale of National Curriculum levels which were used to assess and report children's achievement. The National Curriculum launched in 2014 is based on very different principles and content to the one that preceded it, and its introduction signalled the end of attainment targets and levels. Levels are no longer used for statutory assessments at the end of key stages and they do not appear in RAISEonline reports. This means it is no longer possible for schools to use them as the basis for their own assessment systems. Not only do levels no longer match the content of the National Curriculum 2014, but a fine-graded ladder of attainment does not fit comfortably with a curriculum concerned with breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding, and recognising progress over one or more years.

This means a radical change for the education system; one that both Ofsted and the DfE acknowledge will take time for schools to get right. Moving to a system of assessment without levels provides schools with a significant challenge and presents an opportunity – the chance to develop a coherent system of assessment that supports children's learning, helping every child to make as much progress as possible.

Types of assessment

The Commission on Assessment Without Levels outlines three broad forms of assessment in schools:

1. day-to-day formative assessment
2. in-school summative assessments
3. national statutory summative assessments.

It is the first two of these that schools need to consider when designing a system for assessment without levels. The DfE and the Commission on Assessment Without Levels have been clear that the focus for schools should be assessment for learning, the assessment that will support children to make explicit and demonstrable progress against the content of the curriculum. Assessment for accountability should be left to the statutory national tests and assessments.

“...formative assessment data should not routinely be collected at school level, because of the additional burden it creates.”¹

Ofsted

Assessment without levels in brief

- The removal of National Curriculum levels requires a significant change in the way schools think about assessment and the relationship between curriculum and assessment. This will involve a change of culture across the education system and will take time to become embedded in schools.
- Schools should concentrate on high-quality assessment to inform teaching and learning, to raise attainment and to help to make pupils' progress more visible in their work rather than through data analysis. Schools are accountable for their pupils' attainment and progress. Accountability is the focus of national assessments at the end of key stages.
- Schools, rather than the DfE or Ofsted, should decide how in-school summative assessment and formative assessment will work best to support children's learning through a clear, whole-school assessment policy. It really is up to schools to decide how to best assess pupils. The DfE will only provide the statutory end of key stage tests and guidance on teacher assessments.

Day-to-day formative assessment

Formative assessment is concerned with contributing to and shaping children's future learning. On a day-to-day basis, it might involve teachers making observations of children, marking and feedback, and questioning and dialogue during teaching and learning. Ongoing formative assessment will help to inform teachers' professional judgements, but it does not need to be recorded or tracked. (Pages 12–15 of this guide provide greater detail and practical advice for formative assessment in schools.)

In-school summative assessments

The 2015 report from the DfE's Commission for Assessment Without Levels suggests that schools should ensure that in-school summative assessments take place at key points, such as the end of a unit of work, the end of term or the end of a year. These should include a range of tools such as summative teacher assessments and standardised tests to help provide a snapshot of children's achievement. This can then be recorded to give a sense of a child's progress over a period of time and can also be used for formative purposes. The data collected from any in-school summative assessments may be recorded and 'tracked' but Ofsted notes that this should not be onerous to teachers and should not be done more frequently than termly.

Regular moderation of summative assessments is essential to minimise bias and support accuracy in any judgements made.

“Ofsted does not expect performance and pupil-tracking information to be presented in a particular format. Such information should be provided to inspectors in the format that the school would ordinarily use to monitor the progress of pupils in that school.”²

Ofsted

National statutory summative assessments

In primary schools, national statutory summative assessment is comprised of tests and teacher assessment at the end of key stages 1 and 2, and the Phonics Screening Check. On 21st October 2016, the Secretary of State announced that 'there will be no new tests or assessments introduced before the 2018 to 2019 academic year.'

Early Years Foundation Stage

In the autumn term of 2015, most schools administered one of three new DfE-approved Reception Baseline Assessments: Early Excellence, NFER or BASE from CEM. Although it is a non-statutory assessment, the intention was that the results of the Reception Baseline Assessment will be used to calculate a school's pupil progress measure when these children reach the end of key stage 2 (2022 for the 2015 cohort).

The DfE has subsequently evaluated the comparability of the results of the three different assessments, concluding that 'the three different assessments are not sufficiently comparable to create a fair starting point from which to measure pupils' progress.'

As a result, the key stage 1 assessments will continue to be used as the baseline from which to measure pupils' progress to the end of key stage 2. Schools can continue to use a Reception Baseline Assessment as part of their on-entry evaluation of pupils but the outcomes will not be used for accountability purposes. A list of DfE approved suppliers for 2016/17 has been published and schools can sign up [here](#).

The early years foundation stage profile is statutory for the 2016 to 2017 academic year. The updated handbook can be found [here](#).

The DfE will continue to look into the assessment of pupils in the early years and will consider options for improving assessment arrangements in reception beyond 2016/17.

For up-to-date information on forthcoming changes to assessment and progress measures, visit:

<http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk>

Key Stage 1

Statutory assessment at key stage 1 in reading, writing, mathematics and science will be carried out through teacher assessment. The key stage 1 English grammar, punctuation and spelling test will remain non-statutory in 2017. This test will be marked in school and then children's raw test scores will be converted into a scaled score: 100 represents a child having met national expectations; less than 100 indicates that a child is working below this level; a score of above 100 suggests they are working above. The test outcomes will not be reported but will help to inform teacher assessment judgements.

Teachers will assess the overall performance of most children against three possible standards for reading, writing and mathematics: 'working towards the expected standard', 'working at the expected standard' and 'working at greater depth within the expected standard'. In science there is only 'working at the expected standard' and teachers must decide whether or not each child has met it.

These standards are set out in interim teacher assessment frameworks.^{3,4} The interim frameworks will also be used for teacher assessment in 2017. The principal change is that teacher assessment is no longer a 'best fit' judgement; to have reached a standard, children's recent work must provide evidence that they consistently demonstrate attainment of all the statements within that standard and in all preceding ones.

Key Stage 2

As in previous years, national tests in reading, mathematics, grammar, punctuation and spelling will take place in May. The content of the tests is based on the more challenging content of the National Curriculum 2014, and children's raw scores will be converted into scaled scores, indicating whether or not they have achieved the national expectation (a scaled score of 100 or above).

Teacher assessment will be carried out and reported alongside the test outcomes and will be based on a set of standards, which are set out in the teacher assessment frameworks.^{5,6} For reading and mathematics, where test outcomes rather than teacher assessment will be included in the accountability measures, judgements will be made as to whether or not a child is 'working at the expected standard'. The same approach applies in science. In writing, where there is only teacher assessment, there are three standards: 'working towards the expected standard', 'working at the expected standard' and 'working at greater depth within the

expected standard'. As in key stage 1, judgements are no longer on a 'best fit' basis – children need to consistently demonstrate attainment of each statement within the standard, and in all preceding ones, in order to be judged to be working at a particular standard.

For children with very significant special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), whose attainment is judged to be below the standard of the tests and who are deemed not to have completed the full programmes of study, there are three additional standards in reading, writing and mathematics: 'foundations for the expected standard', 'early development of the expected standard' and 'growing development of the expected standard'. The use of all the new teacher assessment standards is currently being reviewed by the DfE.

“The changes to the National Curriculum and its assessment go well beyond mere changes of content. They invoke very different day-to-day approaches to assessment and signal fundamental shifts in ideas about learning and assessment.”⁷

DfE

Action Points

1. Register for free and watch the following Professional Development & Best Practice videos at www.oxfordowl.co.uk
 - ➔ [Tim Oates: Life Beyond Levels](#)
 - ➔ [Stephen Anwyll: Assessment without Levels: Five Top Tips for Getting Started](#)
 - ➔ [Stephen Anwyll: FAQs: Introducing Assessment](#)
2. As a leadership team, revisit your school assessment policy. Does it cover all three types of assessment described by the Commission for Assessment Without Levels?
3. Review the 2016 teacher assessment exemplification from the DfE at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/standards-and-testing-agency>

Tracking and accountability

In the pre-2014 National Curriculum, the system of levels which summarised expected attainment from Year 1 to Year 9 made it relatively easy to develop a common approach to monitoring and measuring pupil progress. However, in many schools, as data analysis started to take on greater significance, frequent monitoring by sub-levels of progress and average point scores became increasingly detached from a more descriptive approach, which focused on what pupils could do, where they had improved and what they needed to focus on next.

With the implementation of the National Curriculum 2014 and its associated assessment arrangements and accountability measures, pupils' progress over time has become an even more significant issue for schools. The new accountability measures, both floor standards and 'coasting schools' criteria, mean that many more schools than before will rely on the progress of their pupils, rather than their attainment, to avoid being deemed to require improvement (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/primary-school-accountability>). The new approach also means that the amount of progress made by every pupil matters in reading, writing and mathematics; the more progress each pupil makes compared to their prior attainment, the higher the school's published progress scores will be. Progress is also the key focus of the evaluation of pupil premium funding, so schools need to be confident that they can demonstrate and make progress visible to pupils, parents, governors and Ofsted inspectors.

Monitoring progress

So how can schools now track pupils' progress? At the end of each key stage, expectations are defined nationally. For teacher assessment, the interim teacher assessment frameworks set out the criteria for judgements to be reported at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. For the new key stage 1 and key stage 2 tests, performance descriptors for pupils' attainment have been published in the respective test frameworks (see 'Further reading and viewing' on [page 21](#)). In other year groups, the yearly or bi-yearly programmes of study give schools reference points for assessment.

There are a number of potential approaches to developing a school-wide approach. It is possible to track progress against all the year-group objectives. However, this involves a lot of recording. Alternatively you can pick out particularly significant objectives (key performance indicators) and use these as criteria for monitoring progress; however, the danger here is that teaching focuses on these key indicators and pupils consequently do not enjoy a sufficiently broad curriculum.

A simple approach

Any approach to monitoring pupil progress should ensure that teachers have had the time and opportunity to become as familiar as possible with the National Curriculum programmes of study, and then plan to teach and secure them in engaging and effective ways. This gives teachers a more secure basis for making informed, professional judgements based on pupils' responses to what has been taught. A simple method for tracking progress would involve teachers allocating pupils to one of three categories:

1. those who are broadly in line with national expectations for the year group*
2. those who are still working towards them
3. those who are meeting them and also applying and deepening their knowledge, skills and understanding.

Teachers review their judgements, taking into account all the evidence they have (observation, conversations, marking and the outcomes of any tests), at appropriate and agreed points across the year; once a term would generally be enough because that would certainly provide enough new evidence to consider. When these judgements are reported to senior staff, it becomes possible to see whether the balance of pupils in the three categories is changing for the better and how the school can address weaknesses in particular subject areas or pupil groups. It is important to remember, however, that from the teachers' perspective, the critical question is 'What are the significant next steps for each pupil?'; this is how assessment leads to improved teaching and learning.

** By 'national expectations' we mean the aspirations of the National Curriculum 2014, as set out in the programmes of study for each year. These aspirations are high and, at least in the short term, it is likely that the required national standard as reflected in test scores and teacher assessments will be lower.*

Building confidence in assessment judgements

For such an approach to produce reliable assessment information, teachers will need the chance to see whether their interpretation of new expectations is in line with that of others in their own school and indeed elsewhere. It will take time for everyone to become familiar with the revised content and requirements of the curriculum and to build up consistent understanding of expected standards.

One way of helping this to happen is for schools to collaborate in creating opportunities for teachers to compare their judgements about attainment and progress. It is essential that teachers have the chance to look at and discuss samples of work from pupils they consider to be in line with age-related expectations. Not only will this reassure teachers that their interpretation of the new national expectations is in line with colleagues in other schools, even where the socio-economic profile is different, it is also an invaluable professional development opportunity. It can illustrate how the best schools and teachers exploit contexts across the wider curriculum to give pupils opportunities to apply, secure and deepen their learning. It also inevitably leads to discussion about marking and feedback, about how far pupils can exercise independence and choice and how next steps in learning will vary for the different pupils whose work has been sampled. It is also an invaluable professional development opportunity for senior leaders, particularly those who are not classroom-based, to engage with the curriculum and learning in their school.

Within schools, the same approach could be used in a training day or after-school session where teachers in each year group bring along evidence from one or two representative pupils considered to be working at age-related expectations. See [page 14](#) for guidance on consistent expectations of progress across the primary year groups.



Making progress visible

Such activities as previously described involve teachers identifying and describing pupils' progress in relation to real evidence of their learning; progress is clearly visible without the use of numbers or grades. The activities encourage teachers to recognise significant steps in learning and this is exactly what pupils and their parents want to know; how and where have improvements been made and what should be the focus in order to improve further? Further discussion of the importance of effective observation and feedback can be found in [Stephen Anwyll's](#) Professional Development & Best Practice video: *Measuring and Evidencing Progress*.

Everyday progress indicators

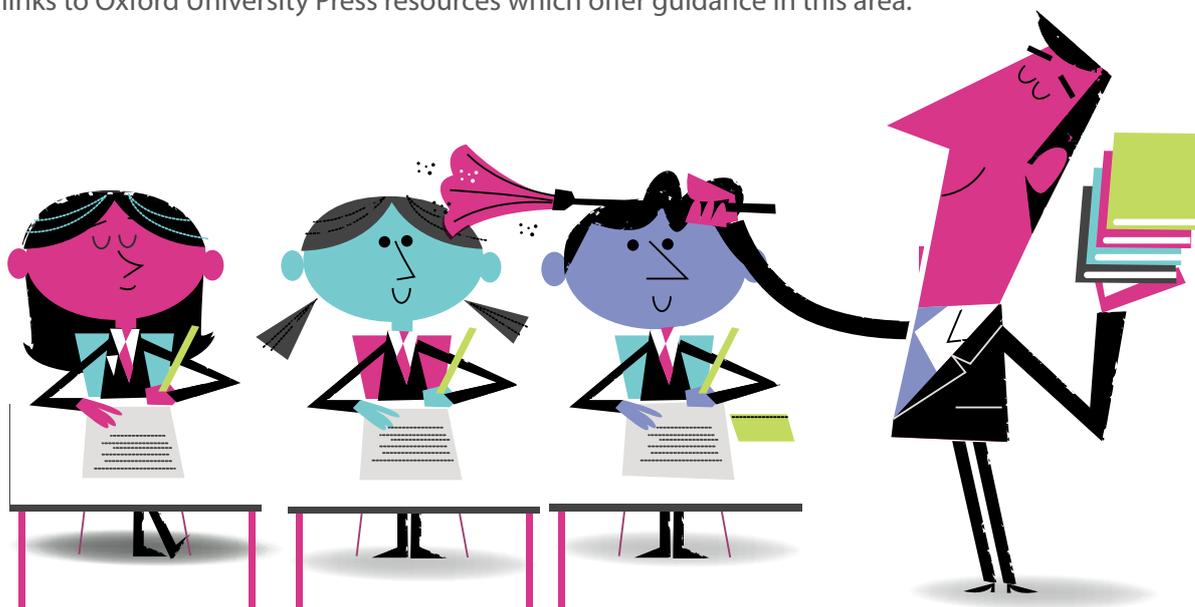
There are lots of activities and skills that are part of everyday learning, which make pupils' progress visible to themselves and others. Some examples of everyday progress indicators include:

- putting more detail into the settings and characters of stories and including more satisfying endings compared to narrative writing completed earlier in the year
- being able to edit and improve their writing so that it is more effective and accurate
- moving on in a reading scheme (e.g. book bands)
- reading a wider range of fiction and non-fiction than before
- consistently solving mathematical problems they could not have tackled last term
- applying their understanding of a concept to new and unfamiliar situations
- being able to explain their answers using different equipment
- using and applying their knowledge of an aspect of mathematics (e.g. measurement and calculating area) in a geography-based project
- being able to give instructions and support other pupils' learning in specific areas (e.g. paired reading, computer studies, PE)
- being able to set out both sides of an argument
- independently using tables, graphs and charts to present information in a science project (e.g. on plant growth or global warming)
- using paragraphs more effectively to organise their writing in history or RE.

What might evidence of progress and attainment look like?

Reading	Mathematics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Attainment demonstrated by children confidently reading texts that offer an age-appropriate challenge (e.g. books from book bands matched to the child's age). → Progress demonstrated by children reading and understanding texts of an increasing challenge (e.g. moving onto higher book bands). → Children's reading age increasing, as measured through a standardised test of reading age. → Children's scores on standardised tests linked to the content of the National Curriculum 2014. → Children's understanding of books or texts they have read demonstrated through written responses (e.g. personal responses or in reading diaries). → Teachers' assessments based on discussion with children during or after reading age-appropriate books (e.g. in guided reading or English lessons). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → A range of work in children's maths books, folders or portfolios demonstrating their understanding of the age-appropriate content of the National Curriculum 2014. → Children's scores on standardised assessments linked to the content of the National Curriculum 2014. → Children's understanding of lesson objectives as described in their own words in their exercise books or maths journals. → Evidence of children's work and use of maths strategies in practice books to illustrate their understanding. → Evidence of children using increasingly efficient methods to solve the same problem. → Teacher observations of children's work with maths apparatus exploring and talking about concepts in greater depth. → Children's marks on assessment tasks set by the teacher or as part of a published resource, focusing on specific areas of the maths curriculum.
Writing	Across the curriculum
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Children's writing in books, folders or portfolios improving, both in terms of composition and transcription over a school year. → Children demonstrating increasing control over their use of language, including the grammar and punctuation aspects of the National Curriculum 2014, as demonstrated across a number of pieces of writing. → Children demonstrating a better sense of audience and purpose when returning to a similar task later in the year (e.g. a persuasive letter written in July showing greater awareness of audience, reflected in the composition and use of language). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Children's work in books, folders or portfolios demonstrating greater depth of knowledge, understanding or control in the given subject (e.g. two different line drawings which show increased pencil control). → Teachers' assessments based on assessment tasks matched to the age-appropriate content of the National Curriculum 2014 (e.g. a child independently drawing and annotating a diagram of the water cycle). → Evidence from teachers' informal tests, quizzes or tasks (e.g. a child's score in a multiple-choice quiz about life in Roman Britain).

See [page 21](#) for links to Oxford University Press resources which offer guidance in this area.



Reporting and using assessment information

With the demise of level descriptions after 25 years, everyone – Government, Ofsted inspectors, local authorities and academy chains, schools, governors, teachers, parents and pupils – will have to get used to new approaches to describing, reporting and organising assessment outcomes and judgements. In the statutory arrangements, new categories of performance have been introduced for teacher assessment, and test outcomes at both key stage 1 and key stage 2 will be reported as scaled scores.

For further discussion of moderation and using data watch [Stephen Anwyll's](#) Professional Development & Best Practice video: *FAQs: Reporting and Organising Data*.

Test outcomes as scaled scores

In the previous system of end of key stage 2 tests, standards were maintained by making adjustments to level thresholds according to whether the evidence suggested that the latest tests were slightly harder or easier than those in previous years. So, if the test of reading at Level 4 appeared to be slightly harder than in earlier tests, the threshold might be lowered by a mark to ensure that the same standards applied and that pupils with similar attainment achieved the same level as in previous years. Each year, the thresholds were announced when schools received their results.

From 2016, although the tests will be designed and marked in the same way as before, the approach to reporting results will be different. Now the tests have been taken for the first time, the new standard for the national expectation has been set. When they started work on the tests, the Standards and Testing Agency set out a performance descriptor for a pupil whose attainment met the new expected standard; this is published in the test frameworks for reading, GPS, mathematics and science. After the tests had taken place, groups of experienced Year 6 teachers looked at a range of evidence and agreed on what mark a pupil who matched the descriptor would have scored in the test. That threshold mark was then converted to 100. All other marks from the tests were then converted to a scaled score where 100 marked the national expectation.

In the future, even if the raw threshold mark is adjusted to allow for proven differences in the difficulty of a test, it will always be converted to 100 so that a pupil who scores 100 in future years will be attaining the same standard as a pupil who scored 100 in 2016.

Although the test results will be reported differently, this doesn't mean that the tests will be more accurate than in the past. It will be important for schools to understand this and to be able to explain it to pupils, parents and receiving secondary schools. A difference of one or two points on the scaled score might not seem to represent a real difference in performance. However, in 2016, a child with a scaled score of 99 (for the reading test) gained 20 marks out of 50; a child with a scaled score of 109 gained 32 or 33 marks. It is important that secondary schools understand what underpins the scaled scores.

The key stage 1 tests (of which outcomes are not reported and which are intended to provide evidence to add to overall teacher assessment judgements) will be marked internally. At the end of the test period schools are sent a 'conversion table' which will allow them to turn pupils' marks into scaled scores. As with key stage 2, a score of 100 represents the nationally expected standard.



Teacher assessment

There are also new assessment criteria for statutory teacher assessment at the end of key stages 1 and 2. Standards statements have been published in the Interim Teacher Assessment Frameworks which set out what pupils must be consistently able to demonstrate in order to be judged as meeting the standard. Where teacher assessment judgements do not figure in school accountability calculations (science at key stage 1 and reading, mathematics and science at key stage 2) then there is only one standard statement for pupils who have completed the programmes of study; this defines performance at the national expectation. The teacher assessment judgement is a simple yes or no – a pupil meets all the statements in the standard or they do not.

Where teacher assessment judgements do figure in school accountability measures (reading, writing and mathematics at key stage 1 and writing at key stage 2), more differentiation is required and three standards have been defined: ‘working towards the expected standard’, ‘working at the expected standard’ and ‘working at greater depth within the expected standard’. Since a pupil must consistently demonstrate attainment of all statements contained in the standard, there is in fact a fourth option for pupils who are ‘not yet working towards the expected standard’. Additional standards have been provided for children whose attainment is below the level of the tests (see [page 5](#) for more details).

The requirement that pupils demonstrate attainment of all the statements in order to be judged to be at the standard is a departure from the ‘best-fit’ approach that has been used in the past. It could lead to more instances of teacher assessment judgements differing from test outcomes. While this is not problematic in itself (the two forms of assessment draw on different evidence and are complementary), schools will need to be clear about how they explain such differences and about where the pupil needs to focus in order to sustain progress.

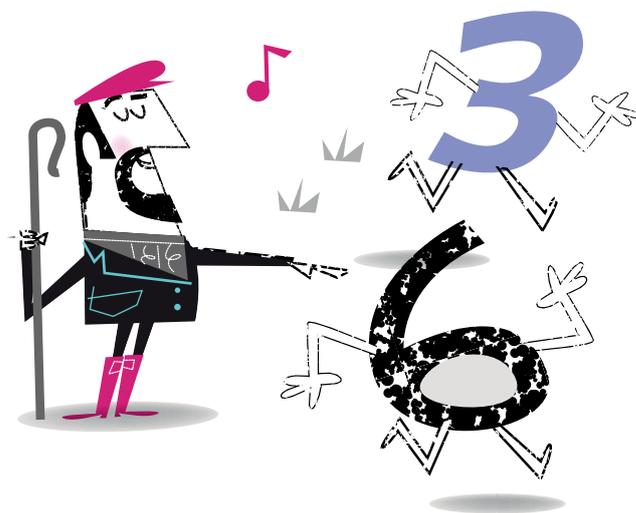
For further exploration of teacher assessment and mastery, register for free and watch the following Professional Development & Best Practice videos at:

www.oxfordowl.co.uk

- [Stephen Anwyll](#): *FAQs: Assessment for Learning and Mastery*
- [Mike Askew](#): *What is mastery?*
- [Helen Drury](#): *Maths Mastery: A ‘Curriculum for Depth’*

Calculating progress

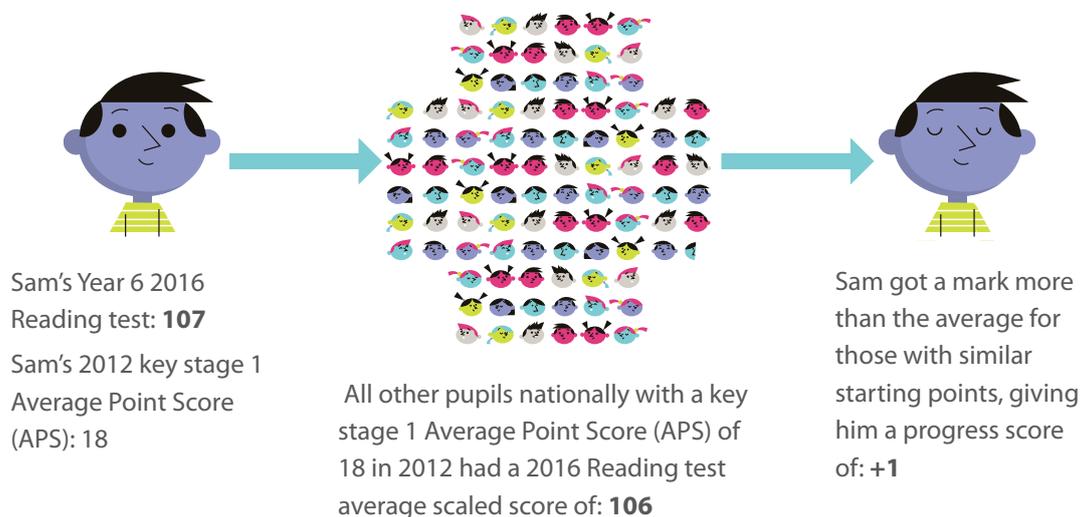
We have explained earlier in this guide how pupils’ progress will become a key focus of the new assessment and accountability landscape and we know the methodology that will be used nationally to calculate progress, whether from key stage 1 to key stage 2, Reception Baseline to key stage 2, or key stage 2 to key stage 4. For primary schools, progress between the end of Year 2 and the end of Year 6 will continue to be the main factor in accountability measures for a number of years to come. From 2016, each pupil’s key stage 2 results will be compared to the average of all those who had the same prior attainment at key stage 1 to see if they have made more or less progress than the average. The scores for all pupils in the school will then be aggregated to give a school progress score from key stage 1 to key stage 2. Full technical details have been published by the DfE in *Primary school accountability in 2016 – A technical guide for primary maintained schools, academies and free schools*⁸, and the approach is illustrated on [page 11](#) using an imaginary Year 6 pupil, Sam, to show how a school’s reading progress score will be calculated.



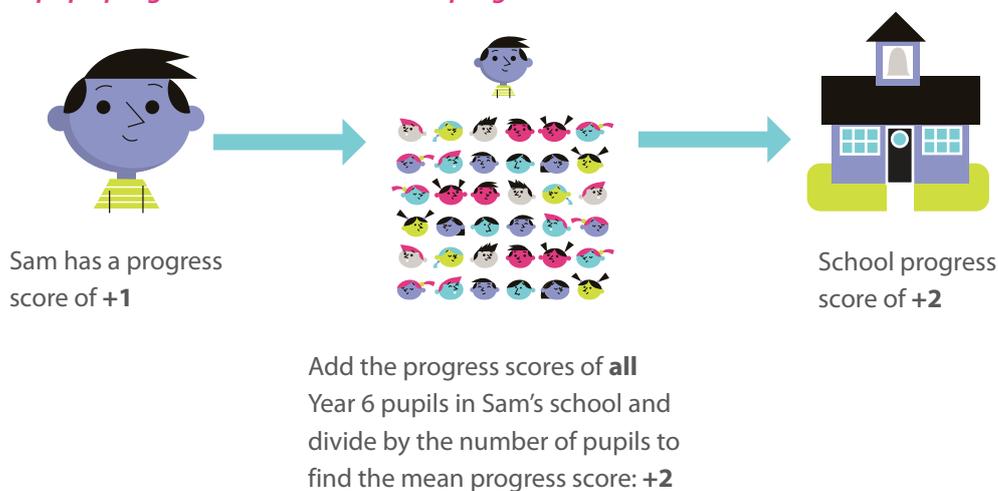
Example of calculating progress between key stage 1 and key stage 2 from 2016

Calculating progress in this way applies to all schools and thereafter for Junior schools.

Calculating individual pupil progress



Using individual pupil progress to calculate school progress



TOP TIPS

Monitoring the progress of pupils with the same prior attainment

With pupils in key stage 1, have a look back at their early Reception Baseline score (if you used a Baseline Assessment) and look at the performance and progress of groups of pupils who achieved the same score. Are there patterns which could help to decide where intervention or additional support is needed to ensure sustained progress across reading, writing and mathematics?

When you are weighing up the progress of pupils during key stage 2, compare the performance of groups of pupils who had the same aggregate outcomes at the end of key stage 1 (i.e. the same average point score across reading, writing and mathematics). Are some pupils making less progress than others? Is this the case in all aspects of English and mathematics or in one or two areas in particular?

Formative assessment

An introduction

Formative assessment, often called assessment for learning, refers to the day-to-day assessments teachers carry out in order to find out what children have and have not understood; this is then used to inform their teaching and shape children's future learning. Making use of a range of strategies and approaches, including using assessments to inform planning and providing effective feedback to students, can have a positive impact on children's progress and achievement right across the curriculum.^{9, 10, 11}

There are no statutory guidelines from the DfE about the use of formative assessment (and the teacher assessment statements are not designed to be used for this purpose). The removal of levels means schools are free to decide how they use assessment to support children's learning. As the final report of the Commission on Assessment Without Levels says:

“Ensuring assessment directly evaluates pupils' knowledge and understanding of curriculum requirements helps to create a virtuous circle of teaching and assessment. Teachers assess pupils' understanding of a topic and identify where there are gaps. This tells the teacher what to focus on in future lessons and prompts the teacher to consider how his or her teaching approach can be adapted to improve pupils' understanding ... In this manner, good teaching and assessment continually reinforce each other and generate continuous improvement.”¹²



Inspection criteria

Ofsted does not make a specific judgment on the use of formative assessment when inspecting schools. However, the Ofsted *School Inspection Handbook*¹³ outlines a number of aspects of formative assessment that inspectors should consider when evaluating the quality of teaching in a school.

Formative assessment: what is Ofsted looking for?

Inspectors will want to know that:

- assessment information is gathered from looking at what pupils already know, understand and can do. In the early years, this is informed by parents/previous providers
- assessment information is used to plan appropriate teaching and learning strategies, including identifying pupils who are falling behind or who need additional support, enabling pupils to make good progress and achieve well
- except in the case of the very young, pupils understand how to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills as a result of useful written or oral feedback from teachers
- the school's engagement with parents/carers helps them to understand how their children are doing in relation to the standards expected and what they need to do to improve
- teachers use any assessment for establishing pupils' starting points, teacher assessment and testing to modify teaching so that pupils achieve their potential by the end of a year or key stage
- assessment draws on a range of evidence of what pupils know, understand and can do across the curriculum
- teachers provide pupils with incisive feedback, in line with the school's assessment policy, about what pupils can do to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills.

Developing formative assessment in the classroom

The key aspects of effective formative assessment are:

- sharing learning intentions with children and checking progress against these
- giving effective feedback to children, delivered both orally and in writing
- using dialogue, discussion and questioning to support learning
- developing a classroom culture where it is fine to make mistakes and then learn from these
- offering opportunities for peer and self-assessment
- the formative use of summative assessments.

The following sections offer some practical advice for embedding formative assessment strategies in your school.

Discussion and questioning

Classroom talk is a key element of both formative assessment and effective teaching and learning. Through rich classroom dialogue children can explore their current ideas, consider the views of others and gain new knowledge and understanding.

Case Study

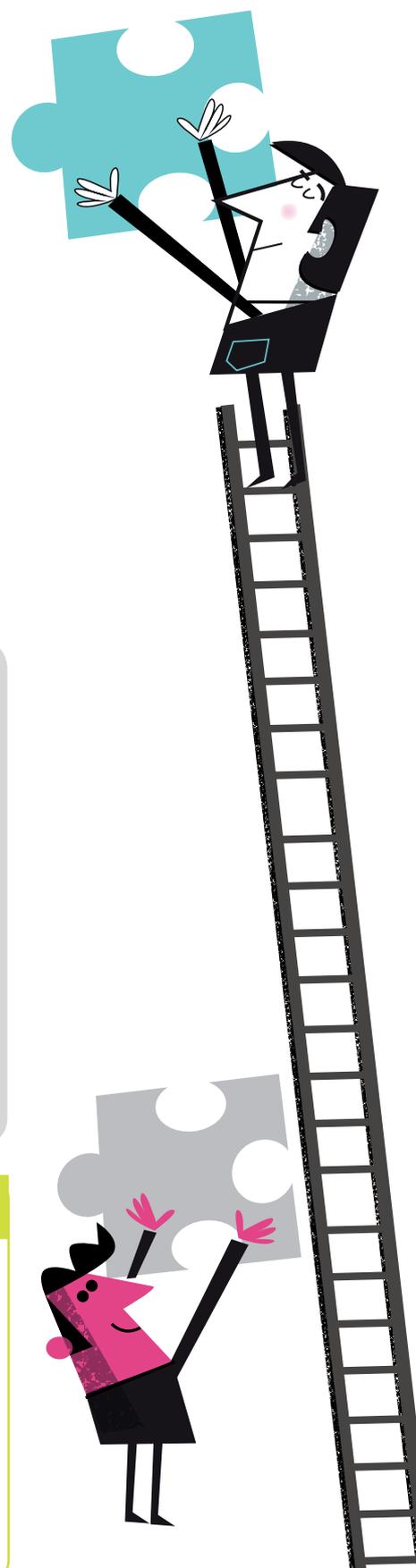
Elmhurst Primary School

At Elmhurst Primary School in East London, Year 5 teacher Jonny Walker uses a range of strategies to support children and enable them to take part in rich discussion and dialogue. The techniques include:

- increasing the time children are given to consider the question and think of an answer before replying ('wait time')
- using more open questions as a starting point for discussion
- encouraging children to ask the teacher and each other rich questions
- promoting a classroom ethos that values 'having a go', where all children are encouraged to contribute even if they are not sure their answer is correct
- inviting other children to provide an answer or comment on another child's response, rather than the teacher immediately responding ('pause bounce pounce' approach).

Action Points

1. As a leadership team, review your assessment policy. Does it contain clear expectations for the use of formative assessment as well as summative assessment?
2. To read more about how the staff at Elmhurst Primary School have embedded formative assessment techniques to support excellent teaching and raise standards of achievement for children, subscribe to www.oxfordowl.co.uk and explore the *Assessment for Learning Pathway*.
3. Organise a learning walk or series of short lesson observations focusing on teachers' use of questioning and dialogue. Are teachers engaging in genuine dialogue with children? What is the ratio of open to closed questions?



Peer and self-assessment

Involving children in the assessment process through peer and self-assessment can bring considerable benefits. This includes the opportunity it gives them to be engaged in and responsible for their own learning, to be autonomous and to work collaboratively. If it is organised well, it can provide another way for children to receive feedback on their work, helping them to make improvements and to learn. Many children find it difficult to consider the quality of their work or that of others and it can take time and require specific guidance to support them to develop these skills. For peer or self-assessment to be effective, teachers will need to do the following:

- Share clear learning objectives and explain the expected outcomes, including models of what this might look like. This will help to ensure that pupils are able to identify when they have met some or all of the success criteria.
- Plan peer- and self-assessment opportunities in lessons and wider units of work across the breadth of the curriculum.
- Explicitly teach children to assess their own work and the work of others.
- Consistently encourage children's self-reflection on their learning so as to identify the next steps in their learning and give them time to address these.

Most children will need to be taught the skills of collaboration necessary to assess work with a classmate. Done properly, this should eventually lead to children being able to assess their own progress, identify areas for improvement and become increasingly independent learners.

Case Study

Fox Primary School

At Fox Primary School in West London, children are given the opportunity to work together collaboratively in many areas of the curriculum, assessing each other's work and supporting their classmates to move forward in their learning. One area where this is especially effective is in spelling. In addition to children working together on investigative spelling tasks, pupils peer-assess each other's spelling work. This provides an extra level of support for children and enables the teachers to focus their time and attention on other aspects of English. For more support and to watch videos featuring Fox Primary School subscribe to www.oxfordowl.co.uk and explore the *Improving Spelling Pathway*.



Marking and feedback

Children need guidance in order to plan the next steps in their learning or to make improvements. The aim of effective formative feedback, whether it involves sitting and talking to a child or providing written feedback, is to improve children's learning. Consider the following:

- Ongoing assessments should feed back into teaching, so learning is adapted to support children's learning.
- The best feedback often comes in the middle of the learning process, so children can act on it.
- Building in time to self-check written work helps children to become autonomous and take responsibility for their own learning.
- Good feedback validates what children have done well.
- If children are given a numerical score (such as a mark or grade), they are more likely to focus on this than any formative comments they receive.
- Effective feedback needs to focus on a few key areas to address, phrased as targets, action points or as questions to prompt thinking and reflection.
- If the child needs more than a few pointers to move to a good level of understanding, then it might be a better use of time to work with the child, providing oral feedback and addressing any errors together rather than marking their work.

“Specificity of feedback is a key determinant of its impact on performance, while feedback that is imprecise may be viewed by pupils as useless or frustrating ... it is likely that short-term targets are more effective than longer-term goals, and when pupils are only working towards a small number of targets at any given time.”¹⁴

Education Endowment Foundation

Feedback: what does Ofsted say?

How a school organises marking and feedback is the responsibility of the school and there are no statutory guidelines for how to structure this. As the Ofsted *School Inspection Handbook* puts it:

“Ofsted recognises that marking and feedback to pupils, both written and oral, are important aspects of assessment. However, Ofsted **does not** expect to see any specific frequency, type or volume of marking and feedback; these are for the school to decide through its assessment policy. Marking and feedback should be consistent with that policy, which may cater for different subjects and different age groups of pupils in different ways, in order to be effective and efficient in promoting learning.”¹⁵

The formative use of summative assessment

Although summative assessments are tests or tasks that are designed to measure what learners can do at any one time rather than to feed forward to support future learning, they can still support children's learning. Using these assessments to help children reflect on the areas in which they still need to make progress can also have a positive effect on their self-esteem, especially for learners who are having difficulty with specific areas of the curriculum.¹⁶ Some practical strategies for this are outlined below.

1. Setting assessments at the start of a unit

A summative assessment at the start of a unit enables the teacher to assess prior knowledge and understanding. This means teaching can be planned to address any gaps in their learning, rather than being based on assumptions about what children can and cannot do.

2. Redrafting the test

Once children have sat a test, they can be given the opportunity to revisit it as a whole class, with a partner, or to take it home as homework. The idea is that they have the opportunity to go back to any questions that they did not answer fully or did not get correct, and redraft them so they get full marks in the test. While the new score (hopefully full marks) cannot be used for summative purposes, this process can be very useful in helping children address any misconceptions they have and improve their learning ready for the next assessment.

3. Model answers

Choose a question from the test that the class found challenging and ask them to work together in small groups to write a model answer for a similar question. It might be a particular calculation or number problem or a written response to a reading comprehension question. The process of discussing what to include in the answer, how to phrase it or which calculations to use can be a useful way of embedding learning.



Action Points

1. Look at the list of effective features of feedback on [page 14](#). How well do these match marking and feedback at your school?
2. Consider the impact of your expectations for marking on your staff. Do the assessment systems you have in place have the greatest possible impact on children's learning relative to the amount of teachers' time they use?
3. Review your use of summative assessments across the school. Could any of them be used for formative purposes, supporting pupils' future learning? How?

Assessment and transition

An introduction to assessment and transition

Transition assumes a particularly critical role in the early stages of implementing a new curriculum. In the case of the National Curriculum 2014, a teacher in Year 6 will not be working with children who have been taught the new curriculum for the whole of key stage 2 until the school year 2017–18 and will not meet children who have experienced the new curriculum throughout key stages 1 and 2 until 2019–20. During the intervening period, teachers will need to constantly adjust their expectations to allow for the different curriculum experience which children bring with them from the previous year group and for the impact of a new emphasis on the application and consolidation of knowledge, skills and understanding.

TOP TIP



Establishing consistent expectations of progress across the primary years

In a training day or after-school session, ask teachers in each year group to bring along evidence from one or two representative children considered to be working at age-related expectations and then get them to briefly present the evidence, starting with the youngest pupils. This activity highlights how learning develops and is built upon as pupils move through school and it is particularly important now that the National Curriculum generally sets out year-by-year objectives in the core subjects. It reduces the risk of class teachers becoming very familiar with the objectives for their year group but less aware of what they are building on and what lies ahead. It should be noted that in English, the objectives for Years 3 and 4 and Years 5 and 6 are combined for reading and writing; defining progress here is more difficult because it is really all about extending opportunities to read and write more widely, in different forms, for different purposes and audiences. It is even more important, therefore, for teachers to compare samples of work so that they build up a sense of what a maturing reader and writer looks like across key stage 2.

The design of the new curriculum, with the programmes of study for reading, writing and mathematics generally set out in year groups, may lead to a greater degree of teacher specialisation in working with specific year groups. So, activities which encourage teaching staff to look 'vertically' from Year 1 to Year 6 and beyond will be of particular value. Again, effective communication around the transition of children across year groups will be crucial.

Some teachers will say that they always want to start afresh with a new group or class of children. However, there has to be a sensible balance between giving the opportunity for pupils to mature and change and building on what is already known about their knowledge, understanding and skills. It is so important for pupils both to feel challenged and stretched and to recognise that they are building on what they already know and can do. As schools redesign and develop their own curriculum, they also have the chance to rethink how they can pass on information about pupils efficiently and in ways that ensure the momentum of learning and progress is maintained.

In the Early Years, there is already a great deal of good practice at transition in terms of summarising and discussing pupils' attainment in the different areas of learning and, importantly, their learning characteristics and attitudes. As pupils get older, and particularly when they move from primary to secondary, there is a much greater reliance (often too much) on purely summative data: scores, grades or overall judgements.

We need to make sure that we complement summary data with key insights that teachers have built up about a pupil's learning over a year. Test outcomes provide a snapshot of a pupil's response to a sample of the curriculum on a single occasion. They can give overall indications but they need to be supplemented by knowledge drawn from a much broader range of evidence over time and across the curriculum. The trick is to capture all of this in a short profile that is easily accessible to the new teacher, i.e. it concentrates on the key information about a pupil's strengths, interests and characteristics and so helps to ensure that the next teacher or teachers can pick up immediately on areas for development and build on existing attainment.

A transition profile

Most teachers will say the most useful transition information comes from dialogue between the ‘donating’ and ‘receiving’ colleagues but of course this is not always possible. Even when conversations can be set up, it is still a good idea to summarise key information in written form. This should simply supplement what has been written in the annual report to parents (statutory in every year group) and include:

- real strengths and particular interests which will be important for the next teacher to recognise and build on. These could be in sport, languages, music, computer programming, drama, etc.
- key next steps in reading, writing and mathematics to help to build directly on recent progress
- clarification where assessment data raises questions, e.g. where test outcomes and teacher assessment judgements are significantly different or where recent progress may have been less than anticipated because of illness or other personal circumstances.

Key points of transition

Moving from one year group to another always represents an important experience for pupils. However, moves across key stages – typically from Reception to Year 1, from Year 2 to Year 3 and from Year 6 to Year 7 – carry additional significance for both pupils and teaching staff. This is at least partly because, as assessment data is used increasingly as the basis for school accountability measures, these are points when the tensions between accurate assessment and fair accountability become clear. For example, at the end of key stage 1, the Year 2 teacher will want to see outcomes which are as high as possible, whereas the receiving Year 3 teacher may be more concerned about the progress that pupils will need to demonstrate in key stage 2 and would prefer more modest prior attainment. You can see the effect of this tension every year in the published data where attainment at the end of key stage 1 is always higher in infant schools

(with only key stage 1 pupils) than in primary schools covering key stages 1 and 2. The same pressures apply as pupils move from key stage 2 into key stage 3. The accountability measure for secondary schools is now based entirely on progress from the end of key stage 2 to the end of key stage 4 so they will be particularly anxious that students arrive in Year 7 with accurate assessment, whereas primary schools will be striving to achieve the highest possible outcomes at the end of Year 6. Ideally, teaching staff in both year groups should be involved in moderating assessments and with increasing numbers of schools and academies covering both primary and secondary age ranges, some interesting transition practice is developing. This includes Year 6 and Year 7 teachers interchanging during the course of the year and Year 6 pupils moving up to their new form in the secondary phase for the last month of the summer term.

Transition from primary to secondary and the risk of pupils losing momentum or repeating content in the early years of secondary school has been an issue for many years. It will remain under government scrutiny and although it will not introduce statutory mathematics and reading resits on children’s arrival in Year 7, there will be a focus on the steps needed to catch up with a targeted package of support for struggling pupils and their teachers.¹⁷ Ofsted has also said that secondary school inspections will have a close look at transition from feeder primaries and progress in the early part of key stage 3:

“Secondary schools should:

- create better cross-phase partnerships with primary schools to ensure that Key Stage 3 teachers build on pupils’ prior knowledge and skills
- make sure that systems and procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils’ progress in Key Stage 3 are robust.

Ofsted will:

- make sure that inspections focus even more sharply on the progress made by Key Stage 3 pupils
- report more robustly on how schools ensure that all pupils make the best possible start to their secondary education.”¹⁸

Action Point

1. Revisit your school’s expectations for transition between classes, key stages and the move to secondary school. How well do they match with the principles outlined here?

Inspection and school improvement

Curriculum, assessment and pedagogy are the three elements on which any successful learning depends. In the most effective schools, they are interdependent and mutually reinforcing; the curriculum engages and challenges pupils because it has been informed by continuous assessment and is delivered via stimulating and varied teaching. School improvement can start with a focus on any one of the elements, but it relies on all three working successfully together. Improving assessment will naturally lead to better planning, a richer curriculum, improved teaching and learning, better use of resources to maximise pupil progress and better outcomes for children, parents and the school. Whatever challenges it brings, the introduction of a new curriculum and associated assessment arrangements offers schools a real opportunity to review policy and practice so that these three elements work together as well as possible for the benefit of pupils.

For further discussion on the importance of assessment for schools watch [Stephen Anwyll's](#) Professional Development & Best Practice video: *FAQs: Inspections and School Improvement*.



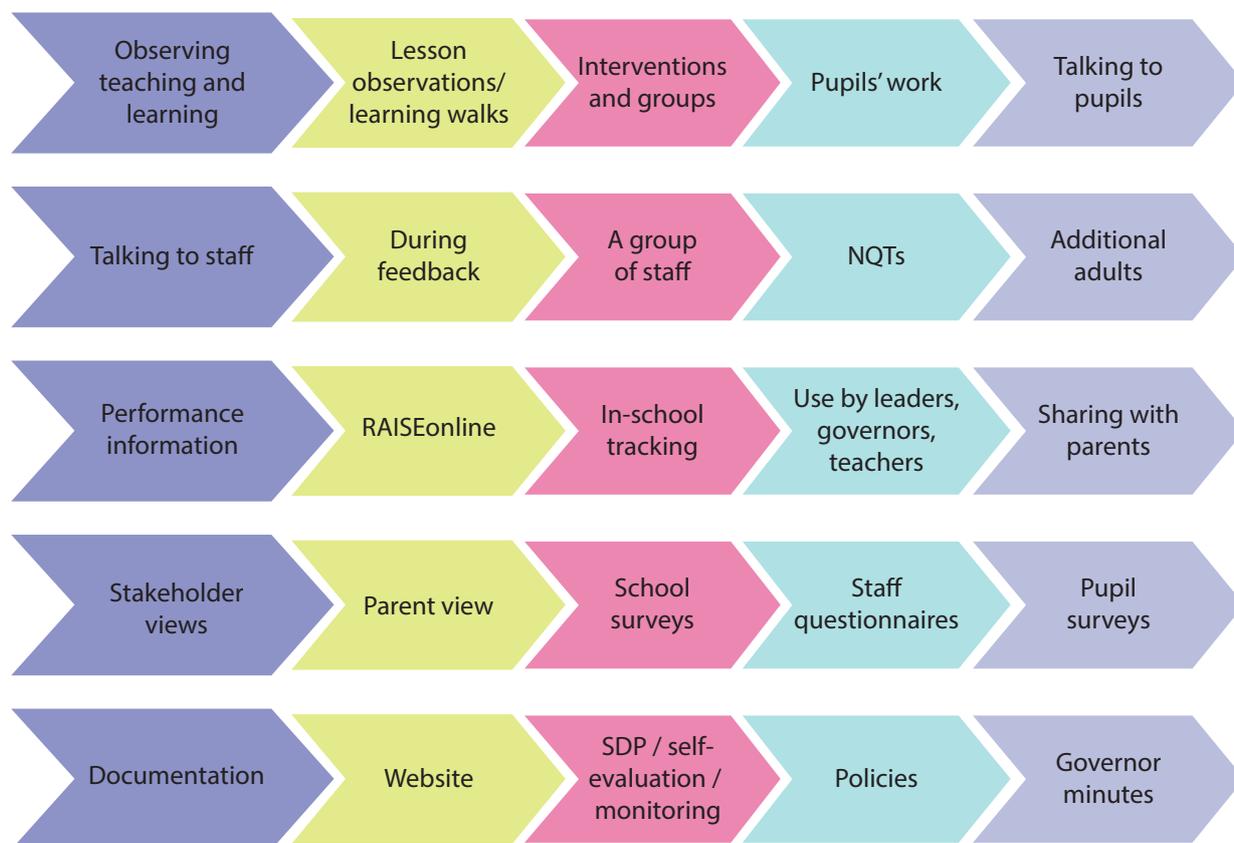
Ofsted's expectations

What will Ofsted expect to see as schools establish new policies and practices to reflect the implementation of revised curriculum content and higher expectations? Well, inspectors are in the same position as everyone else; they will have to wait and see exactly where the new expected standards are set at the end of key stages 1 and 2 and they accept that data will be much less reliable in the first few years of implementation. In holding schools to account, they also recognise there will be a need for an even greater focus on pupils' progress. This means that inspectors will be looking harder at the evidence within classrooms, in pupils' books and from discussions with pupils and staff. Essentially, however, they will be asking the same question that Ofsted has always asked – how well is the school using assessment information (however it is categorised, gathered and recorded) to improve outcomes for children? So they will want to see:

- how consistently and effectively teachers are drawing on evidence of pupils' learning to provide constructive feedback, adjust curriculum content and planning, and refine pedagogy so that learning is enhanced
- how clearly the school communicates its assessment judgements to pupils and to parents so that all parties are aware of where there has been improvement, what are the key next steps and how all parties can work together to achieve further progress
- how well the school's senior leadership (including governors) is analysing available assessment information in order to make appropriate strategic decisions and deploy human and financial resources to meet pupils' needs.

The Ofsted *School Inspection Handbook* is quite clear in stating that inspectors will not expect to see a school's ongoing assessment practice or information in any specific form. What they will expect is that the school applies its policy consistently, has a clear rationale for its approach, can justify and explain it with confidence and acts on the evidence that assessment provides. They will be able to see the school's assessment practice in a wide range of places.

Sources of inspection evidence for a school's assessment policy and practice

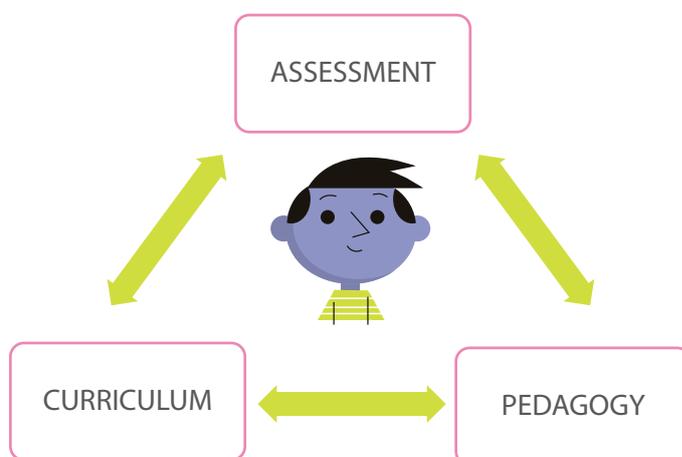


'Sources of inspection evidence for a school's assessment policy and practice', Jacqueline Marshall, used with permission.

Assessment in a wider context

In terms of making assessment judgements based on nationally developed criteria or the interpretation of expected standards, schools need to work together to build common understandings and to be able to place their pupils' attainment and progress in a wider context. This aspect of assessment practice is an essential element of school improvement. When teachers have the opportunity to look at and discuss the work of pupils in other schools, they are not only improving their assessment expertise but also gaining insights into other ways of planning a curriculum and into the pedagogy of other teachers, helping them reflect on and refine their own practice. Such opportunities reinforce a 'virtuous triangle' of curriculum, assessment and pedagogy, which underpins all effective learning.

Assessment, curriculum and pedagogy – a virtuous triangle



Further support

Auditing assessment in your school

This audit tool will help you to consider the progress towards assessment without levels in your school.*

Statement	1 Strongly agree	2 Agree	3 Disagree	4 Strongly disagree	5 Not sure
We have made changes to our schemes of work to bring them in line with the demands of the National Curriculum 2014.					
We have agreed clear principles for how assessment will be organised at our school.					
We have a clear and accurate assessment policy, which addresses: <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ national statutory summative assessments→ in-school summative assessments→ day-to-day formative assessment.					
We have decided who is responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ ensuring the assessment policy is followed→ monitoring the effectiveness of assessment practices in the school.					
We have considered how our assessments will be moderated to help ensure consistency and accuracy of our assessment judgement.					
We have communicated our policy and systems to ensure good understanding of assessment and assessment practice amongst all teachers.					
We are aware of the specific strategies for formative assessment that can be effective in different year groups and subjects.					
We have considered how to accurately assess the progress, attainment and wider outcomes of pupils with SEND, including those with complex needs.					

*Tool taken from the *Assessment without Levels Pathway* on Oxford Owl.

Further reading and viewing

National Curriculum assessments: Standards and Testing Agency test frameworks for key stages 1 and 2:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum-assessments-test-frameworks>

Ofsted (2015). *Ofsted key stage 3 curriculum survey 2015: 8 good practice case studies*. Manchester: Ofsted.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-key-stage-3-curriculum-survey-2015-8-good-practice-case-studies>

Department for Education (March 2016) *Educational Excellence Everywhere*.
 London: DfE, © Crown Copyright 2016:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508447/Educational_Excellence_Everywhere.pdf

Association for Achievement and Improvement through Assessment

<https://www.aaia.org.uk/blog/category/news/>

Tim Oates: *Life Beyond Levels*:

<http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/welcome-back/for-school-back/pd-bp/experts/tim-oates>

Stephen Anwyll: *Assessment without Levels: Five Top Tips for Getting Started*:

<http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/welcome-back/for-school-back/pd-bp/experts/stephen-anwyll>

Ros Wilson: *Assessment for Learning and Big Writing*:

<http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/welcome-back/for-school-back/pd-bp/experts/ros-wilson>

Oxford University Press resources

Whether you are looking for a 'ready-made' assessment solution, or the advice and tools to help you develop your own, Oxford is here to support you.

Whole-school Assessment

A unique four-step system to deliver effective school improvement. Specific assessment *Pathways* include *Assessment Without Levels* and *Assessment for Learning*. Visit www.oxfordowl.co.uk to find out more.



Subject Area Assessment

Oxford Primary English Assessment

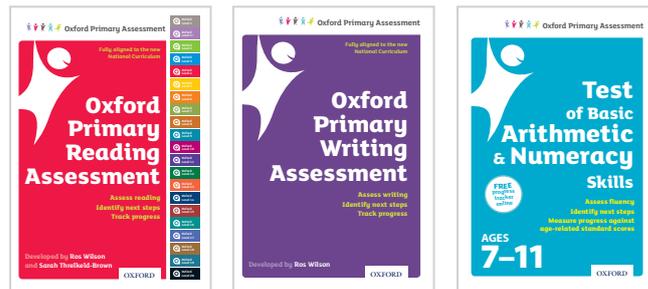
Assessment handbooks that give schools everything they need to ensure consistent teacher assessment of reading and writing, without the National Curriculum levels.

Test of Basic Arithmetic and Numeracy Skills

Assess children's fluency in number using standardised scores – perfect for the National Curriculum.

High-quality resources with in-built assessment

Deliver your teaching using our range of resources that are proven to work, including *Read Write Inc.*, *Project X*, *Oxford Reading Tree*, *Numicon* and *Inspire Maths*.



Endnotes

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- 2 Ofsted (2016). *School inspection handbook*. Manchester: Ofsted.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-from-september-2015>
- 3 Standards and Testing Agency (July 2016). *Interim teacher assessment frameworks at the end of key stage 1*.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/key-stage-1-teacher-assessment>
- 4 Standards and Testing Agency (July 2016). *Pre-key stage 1: pupils working below the test standard*.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/key-stage-1-teacher-assessment>
- 5 Standards and Testing Agency (July 2016). *Interim teacher assessment frameworks at the end of key stage 2*.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/key-stage-2-teacher-assessment>
- 6 Standards and Testing Agency (July 2016). *Pre-key stage 2: pupils working below the test standard*.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/key-stage-2-teacher-assessment>
- 7 *Commission on Assessment Without Levels*. (2015) Final Report. London: DfE.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/commission-on-assessment-without-levels-final-report>
- 8 *Primary school accountability in 2016: A technical guide for primary maintained schools, academies and free schools*. (2016) London: DfE 2016. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/primary-school-accountability>
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https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/EEF_Marking_Review_April_2016.pdf
- 15 Ofsted (2016). *School Inspection Handbook*. Manchester: Ofsted, © Crown Copyright 2016.
- 16 Harlen, W. and Deakin Crick, R. (2003) 'Testing and motivation for learning', *Assessment in Education: Principles, policy and practice*, 10 (2), pp.169–207.
- 17 Justine Greening statement 21 Oct 2016 <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/primary-education>
- 18 Ofsted (2015). *Key stage 3: the wasted years?* Manchester: Ofsted, © Crown Copyright 2015.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-3-the-wasted-years>



A Guide to Assessment

Tools and support for primary schools in England

This guide is for primary teachers, but will be of particular interest to Senior Leadership Teams (SLTs), including headteachers and middle leaders with responsibility for school assessment arrangements, tracking progress and accountability measures.

Building on the report produced by the Commission on Assessment Without Levels, it provides up-to-date information, advice and practical ideas for approaching assessment in school, including how schools can develop their practice in terms of tracking, accountability and reporting, as well as using assessment information to best effect for learners.

Oxford OWL

The assessment and accountability landscape is changing all the time. To keep up to date with all the latest information and expert advice join us for free at www.oxfordowl.co.uk and sign up for our primary blog at <http://educationblog.oup.com>