



Assessment Without Levels

From this September, the Government has made a huge change in the way that children in schools are to be assessed. This is to tie in with the New National Curriculum that started to be used by all schools at the beginning of this Academic Year. This is a new way of thinking for schools, and assessment will look very different to how it has done for the past 20 years. The aim of this guide is to hopefully give you some clear information about all the changes that are happening in Education across the country and what that means for the children here at Langham. Before we even think about assessment we need to be clear on what changes the new curriculum has brought to subjects that are traditionally assessed.

Curriculum 2014

So, what are the changes to the curriculum? It would take far too long to cover the whole curriculum, particularly in any great depth. But the main changes to the key core subjects are highlighted below.

English - The new programme of study for English is knowledge-based; this means its focus is on knowing facts rather than developing skills and understanding. It is also characterised by an increased emphasis on the technical aspects of language and less emphasis on the creative aspects. English is set out year by year in Key Stage 1 and two-yearly in Key Stage 2. Appendices give specific content to be covered in the areas of spelling and vocabulary, grammar and punctuation. These are set out yearly across both key stages.

Mathematics - The main areas in the new programme of study for mathematics are called domains. These are number, measurement, geometry, statistics, ratio and proportion and algebra. Two of these, number and geometry, are further divided into subdomains. The way that the curriculum is organised varies across the primary age range – every year group has a unique combination of domains and subdomains. There is no longer a separate strand of objectives related to using and applying mathematics. Instead, there are problem-solving objectives within the other areas of study. Most of the changes to the mathematics curriculum involve content being brought down to earlier years.

The End of Curriculum Levels

The Department for Education (DfE) decided that the children who have just completed Years 2 and 6 will be the last pupils to be awarded a level in their end of Key Stage tests (Summer 2015).

So why are levels disappearing?

The DfE want to avoid what has been termed 'The level Race' where children have moved through the old National Curriculum levels quickly to achieve higher attainment. The old National Curriculum was sub-divided into levels, but these were not linked to their national curriculum year group. For example, a child in Year 4 could be a Level 3 or even a level 5. Children were achieving Level 5 and 6 at the end of Key Stage 2, but the DfE thought that a significant number were able to achieve a Level 5 or 6 in a test—but were not secure at that level. The feeling from the DfE was that the old national curriculum and the levels system—failed to adequately ensure that children had a breadth and depth of knowledge at each national curriculum level.

Assessing Without Levels

The DfE announced last year that there would no longer be National Curriculum levels and that schools would have to set up their own way of assessing pupils. We have spent a long time researching various different methods of assessing pupils, we have decided to use a software tracking system called Pupil Asset. This is to be used by all our Cluster schools including the High School. The system is similar to the system used in the Early Years. This is to take the end of year expectations for each year group and to split this into 4 categories as follows:

- **Beginning** - At early stage of development
- **Developing** - Growing ability and independence
- **Embedded** - Exhibits skill independently
- **Mastery** - Exhibits skill spontaneously and with confidence

Under the old levels system children who were exceeding might have moved into the next level. The DfE now want children who are in the exceeding bracket to add more depth and breadth to their knowledge, and to have more opportunities to develop their using and applying skills. They are calling this phase of learning Mastery and Depth. Only exceptional children will move into working towards the end of year expectations from the year above. Similarly, children who are unlikely to be emerging at the end of the year may work towards the expectations from the year below. So how will this look at the end of each Key Stage?

It is anticipated that the majority of children at the end of the year will reach developing or embedded. A smaller number of children will reach mastered, and a small number will be beginning, or possibly beginning/developing/embedded for a previous Year group.

The biggest difference is how we will talk to you about how your child is progressing during the year. With the old National Curriculum levels, each year children were given a target for the end of the year, and during the year we would tell you what National Curriculum level your child was at. For Example: A child could finish Year 3 with a level 3a, and in Year 4 would have a target of a 4b for the end of the year. At Parent's Evenings throughout the year you may have been told that they have moved to a 4c and then on to a 4b.

We could use the levels system this way because there was no correlation between a level and a child's year group, and this can be seen in the way that in a Year 6 class there could be a range of levels, from level 2 to a level 6. However, the new National Curriculum sets out expectations for each year group and children will be assessed against those every year, so a child in Year 4 will always be judged in the first instance against the expectations for the end of Year 4.

So how will the process in school work? Each term teachers will have had an opportunity to assess how the children are working. They will assess every child as **beginning/developing/Embedded/Mastered** as they are judged against the End of Year statements. By using their professional knowledge and judgement teachers will know what the children can already do. Only very exceptional children will have a forecast from a higher or lower year group. As far as we are aware Year 6 **Mastery** is likely to be the highest grading for the end of Key Stage 2.

During the year, when we have conversations with you about your child's progress you won't be given an actual definitive position of where they are on this scale. Instead you will be told whether your child is on track to meet their end of year target. It may well be that they are above or below where they need to be, in which case their end of year target may be adjusted.

We hope that you find this guide useful to help you understand why and how assessment has changed.

Please ask if you have any further questions.

Mrs Kossowicz

November 2015