

News story: New measure for fairer recording of primary school performance

Assessments to measure the progress pupils make from the very start of primary school are, following an open procurement exercise, set to be designed and delivered by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), the School Standards Minister Nick Gibb announced today.

The assessments will ensure that schools are recognised for getting the best outcomes for their pupils and that teachers receive credit for their hard work during the initial years of education.

The Reception Baseline Assessment will be administered as a twenty-minute, teacher-recorded assessment of children's communication, language, literacy and early mathematics skills. It will cover material that many children will already be familiar with and pupils will not have to prepare for it, either at home or in school. It will replace the statutory tests which pupils have faced at the end of Key Stage 1, freeing up teacher time and resources so they can focus on what really matters in the classroom.

The activity-based assessment will enable better, fairer measures of primary school performance by capturing the progress teachers help pupils to make from the first weeks of reception all the way through to the end of year 6. Current progress measures are based on data from the end of Key Stage 1, which means they do not give schools credit for the crucial work they do with pupils in reception, year 1 and year 2.

Assessments form a fundamental part of a child's education and many teachers already routinely assess children when they start the reception year to inform their teaching and identify where extra support is needed.

Today's announcement is part of wider plans to create an excellent primary assessment system and will build on the progress already being made in schools across England, with 1.9 million more children in good or outstanding schools than in 2010.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

A good primary education lays the foundations for success at secondary school and beyond, so it is right that we help make sure every child reaches their potential from the moment they start their education.

This quick, simple assessment will us help to capture the progress that children make throughout primary school and provides a fairer measure for school accountability. I would encourage teachers and headteachers to work with us through the trials and pilot to make

sure we get the assessment and measures right.

Academic standards are rising thanks to the hard work of teachers and our reforms. Our young readers are among the best in the world, the proportion of primary pupils reaching the expected standards in reading, writing and maths is up 8 percentage points and the attainment gap has narrowed by 10.5% since 2011.

Ahead of the assessment being rolled out to all schools by the end of 2020, the NFER will, subject to final contracts, work closely with teachers across the country to ensure the check is age-appropriate for reception year pupils. It will not be used to judge, label or track individual pupils.

The Department for Education has also confirmed today that:

- When the baseline is fully established, Key Stage 1 assessments will become non-statutory for first and infant schools and, at the same time, they will become non-statutory for all-through primaries;
- From 2027, reception to Key Stage 2 progress measures will be published for all-through primary schools, but not for those with a different age range;
- First and infant schools will continue not to have progress measures published. These schools will continue to be responsible for demonstrating the progress their pupils have made to Ofsted and those with an interest in school performance; and
- Middle and junior schools will be in a similar position to first and infant schools with responsibility for evidencing progress based on their own assessment information.

Carole Willis, Chief Executive of NFER said:

We are pleased to have been selected as DfE's preferred supplier for the new Reception Baseline Assessment. As a not-for-profit organisation, we are committed to projects that will improve education and outcomes for children and young people, such as our recent work on teacher recruitment and retention, and our work on social mobility.

NFER has been developing robust assessments for over 70 years, for use by teachers, schools and government agencies. Our experience in producing a Reception Baseline Assessment in 2015 demonstrated that it is possible to undertake a robust assessment of children's language, literacy and numeracy skills at this age. Reception children enjoy taking our assessment – which involves using resources such as counting teddy bears, plastic shapes and picture sequencing cards, reflecting familiar classroom practice.

This new assessment is intended to be a cohort level measure, rather than an individual pupil measure. Introducing such a measure at the start of reception allows the huge contribution that schools make to children's progress in the first three years of school to

be properly recognised.

The introduction of the reception baseline assessment, which is supported, in principle, by the National Association of Headteachers and the Association of School and College Leaders, follows an extensive public consultation and is part of wider changes to the primary assessment system which focus on pupil progress, mastering literacy and numeracy, and scrapping unnecessary workload for teachers. Following the consultation, the government confirmed it would:

- Improve the early years foundation stage profile, including revising the early learning goals to better prepare children for year 1 and reviewing the assessment guidance and process to reduce teacher workload and allow teachers to use their professional judgments;
- Remove some of the wider burdens on teachers, including making Key Stage 1 tests and assessments non-statutory from 2023 and remove the requirement for schools to submit teacher assessment data to the government for reading and maths at the end of Key Stage 2, as these subjects are already assessed through statutory tests, from 2018-19;
- Introduce a [multiplication tables check](#) to aid children's fluency in mathematics from 2019-20; and
- Improve teacher assessment of English writing by giving teachers greater scope to use their professional judgement when assessing pupils at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 from the current academic year (2017-18).